

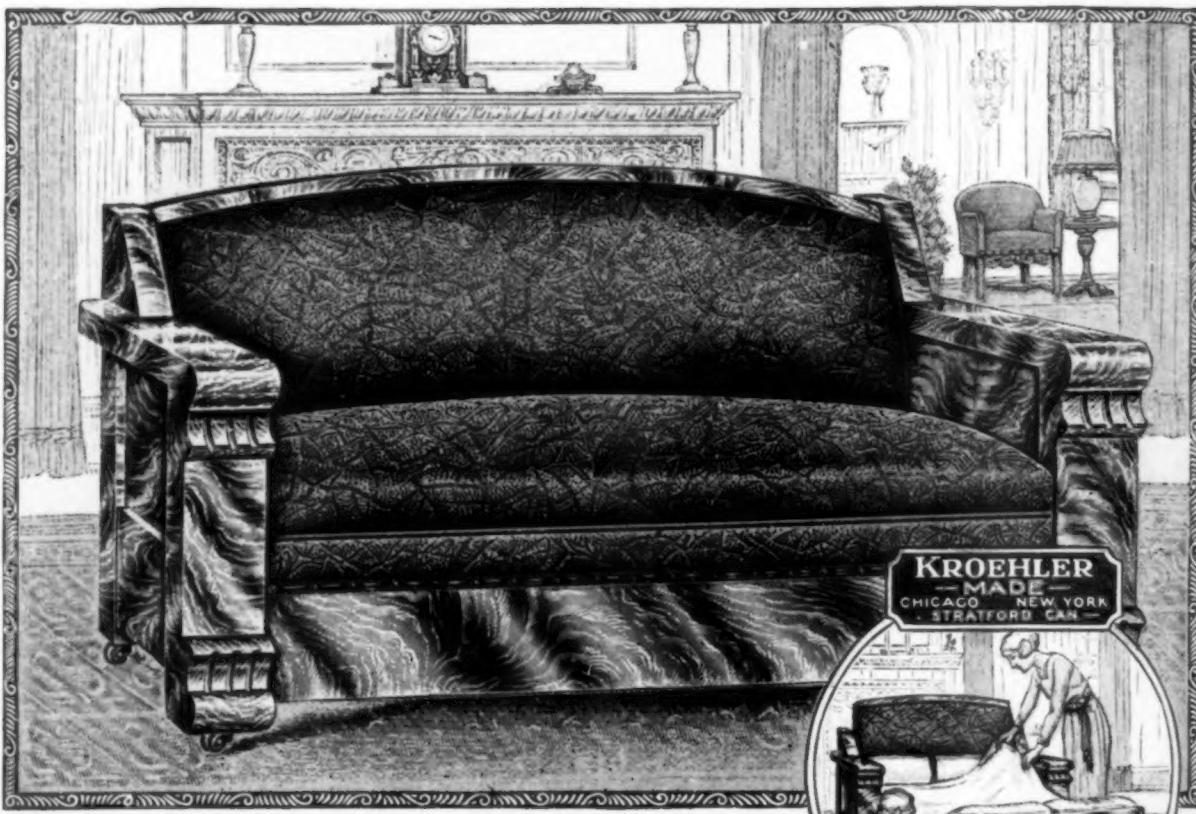
JUNE, 1924

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The MARTINET



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Love
Laughter



No Money Down

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Golden Oak, Fumed Oak or Mahogany Finish

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as checked in square above, showing finish I desire, and with it, absolutely FREE, the beautiful 7-Piece Glass Water Set. I am to pay nothing for goods on arrival—only the freight charges. I am to have 30 days' free trial. If satisfied, I will send you \$4.50 monthly until full price of Davenport, \$49.85, is paid. Will pay nothing at any time for the Water Set. Title remains with you until paid in full. If not satisfied, after 30 days' free trial, I will ship both Davenport and Water Set back and you will pay transportation charges both ways.

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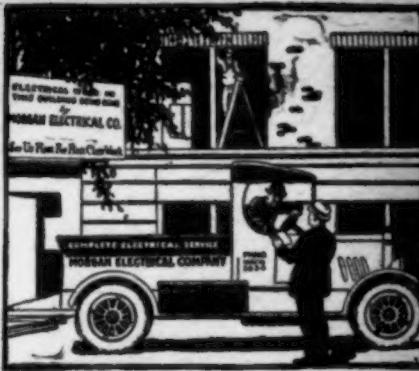
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And Various Burlesques, Epigrams, Poems, Etc.

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The Most Daring Book Ever Written!

Elinor Glyn, famous author of "Three Weeks," has written an amazing book that should be read by every man and woman—married or single. "The Philosophy of Love" is not a novel—it is a penetrating searchlight fearlessly turned on the most intimate relations of men and women. Read below how you can get this daring book at our risk—without advancing a penny.

WILL you marry the man you love, or will you take the one you can get?

If a husband stops loving his wife, or becomes infatuated with another woman, who is to blame—the husband, the wife, or the "other woman"?

Will you win the girl you want, or will Fate select your Mate?

Should a bride tell her husband what happened at seventeen?

Will you be able to hold the love of the one you cherish—or will your marriage end in divorce?

Do you know how to make people like you?

If you can answer the above questions—if you know all there is to know about winning a woman's heart or holding a man's affections—you don't need "The Philosophy of Love." But if you are in doubt—if you don't know just how to handle your husband, or satisfy your wife, or win the devotion of the one you care for—then you must get this wonderful book. You can't afford to take chances with your happiness.

What Do YOU Know About Love?

DO you know how to win the one you love? Do you know why husbands, with devoted, virtuous wives, often become secret slaves to creatures of another "world"—and how to prevent it? Why do some men antagonize women, finding themselves beating against a stone wall in affairs of love? When is it dangerous to disregard convention? Do you know how to curb a headstrong man, or are you the victim of men's whims?

Do you know how to retain a man's affection always? How to attract men? Do you know the things that most irritate a man? Or disgust a woman? Can you tell when a man really loves you—or must you take his word for it? Do you know what you *MUST NOT DO* unless you want to be a "wall flower" or an "old maid"? Do you know the little things that make women like you? Why do "wonderful lovers" often become thoughtless husbands soon after marriage—and how can the wife prevent it? Do you know how to make marriage a perpetual honeymoon?

In "The Philosophy of Love," Elinor

Glyn courageously solves the most vital problems of love and marriage. She places a magnifying glass unflinchingly on the most intimate relations of men and women. No detail, no matter how avoided by others, is spared. She warns you gravely, she suggests wisely, she explains fully.

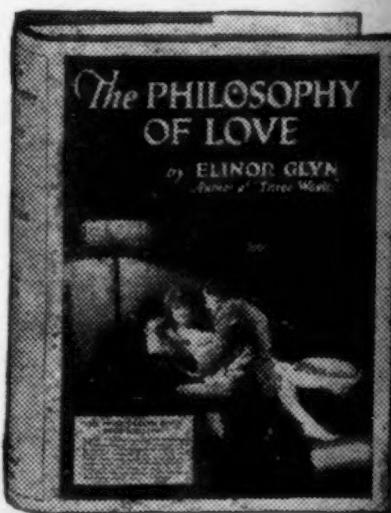
"The Philosophy of Love" is one of the most daring books ever written. It had to be. A book of this type, to be of real value, could not mince words. Every problem had to be faced with utter honesty, deep sincerity, and resolute courage. But while Madame Glyn calls a spade a spade—while she deals with strong emotions and passions in her frank, fearless manner—she nevertheless handles her subject so tenderly and sacredly that the book can safely be read by any man or woman. In fact, anyone over eighteen should be compelled to read "The Philosophy of Love"; for, while ignorance may sometimes be bliss, it is folly of the most dangerous sort to be ignorant of the problems of love and marriage. As one mother wrote us: "I wish I had read this book when I was a young girl—it would have saved me a lot of misery and suffering."

Certain shallow-minded persons may condemn "The Philosophy of Love." Anything of such an unusual character generally is. But Madame Glyn is content to rest her world-wide reputation on this book—the greatest masterpiece of love ever attempted!

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YOU need not advance a single penny for "The Philosophy of Love." Simply fill out the coupon below—or write a letter—and the book will be sent to you on approval. When the postman delivers the book to your door—when it is actually in your hands—pay him only \$1.98, plus a few pennies postage, and the book is yours. Go over it to your heart's content—read it from cover to cover—and if you are not more than pleased, simply send the book back in good condition within five days and your money will be refunded instantly.

Over 75,000,000 people have read Elinor Glyn's stories or have seen them in the movies. Her books sell like magic. "The Philosophy of Love" is the supreme culmination of her



WARNING!

The publishers do not care to send "The Philosophy of Love" to anyone under eighteen years of age. So, unless you are over eighteen, please do not fill out the coupon below.

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The Ghost

By John Torcross

ALL his life he had feared ghosts, and cold shivers ran down his spine as he lay quivering and staring spellbound at the apparition that stood at the foot of his bed. Great clouds of smoke issued from its mouth and nostrils, and its hair was scraggly and unkempt. A strange, unearthly light shone from its darkened eyes. As it swayed to and fro, the dawn broke and filled the room: the figure tossed aside its cigarette.

"Just came in to say good night, pop," it chuckled, and the other breathed with relief. He realized it was only his débutante daughter, just home from a dance.



The Swelled Head

By H. C. North

"IT'S the same old story," said Dobbs, as he cocked his feet on the porch railing of the Rayburg Country Club. "A man grows up in a small town; goes to the city; makes his pile; and then visits his home town, with such a swelled head that he barely speaks to any of his old friends—his good old friends."

"You're thinking of Hill, eh?" queried one of the group gathered on the porch.

"Yes, I'm thinking of Hill," snorted Dobbs. "Why, that bird, after being away for ten years, shows up here with a bank account that would make you dizzy, and then proceeds to utterly disregard his old chums—utterly disregard us, I say."

"What right's that simp got to have a swelled head?" chimed in Chalmers. "When he lived here, he was as poor as a church mouse, and nobody invited him anywhere."

"Sure," rejoined Dobbs, "why, we even voted him down at the club; remember that?"

"Yeah," said Chalmers, "and there wasn't a girl who would dance with him. We used to laugh at him—and now he comes back—"

"It's the old story," said Dobbs with a nod; "money and a swelled head."



This Terrible Truth

Vitally Concerns Your Future Health

The dreadful facts presented on this page are known to every Doctor. You should know them also, so that you may protect yourself against the most treacherous enemy of the human race.

WHEN sickness or disease assails your home and the doctor comes, what is the first question that he asks? "How are your bowels?" He asks it so regularly that you have come to look upon it almost as a formality to be expected. However, it is not a formality but a tremendously serious question which harsh experience has taught him to always ask because in nine cases out of ten where sickness is present it is due to constipation, that state of bowel inactivity which is sooner or later directly responsible for nearly all the diseases that afflict the human flesh.

One Famous Doctor's Experience

Less than 10% of the cases examined by Dr. H. T. Turner, eminent specialist, were found to be free from the insidious ravages of constipation. Like a thief in the dark it attacks its victims, robbing them of brain energy, physical strength, and the vitality of life itself.

If you could only recognize this menace in time; if you could only see the terrible results of its neglect—but read this experience of Doctor Turner's. It is not at all an exceptional case, but, as he himself says, "Out of two hundred and eighty-four cases (representing nearly all the diseases known to our climate) two hundred and fifty-six were more or less as this one described."

"I opened the colon (in post-mortem examination) throughout the entire length of five feet and found it filled with faecal matter, encrusted on its walls and into the folds of the colon, in many places as dry and hard as slate, and so completely obstructing the passage of the bowels as to throw the patient into violent colic (as his friends stated) sometimes as often as twice a month for years, and that powerful doses of physic were his only relief."

This condition, Doctor Turner further states, was the cause of hemorrhoids or piles of years' standing.

"...and still this man had no trouble in getting his life insured by one of the best companies in America, and was considered a strong and healthy man by his family and neighbors."

This man and many others, says Doctor Turner, had regular evacuations of the bowels each day.

How could they know the deplorable condition of the intestines—the condition that caused the doctor to say:

"As I stood there looking at the colon, that reservoir of death, I expressed myself, as my patients do daily, in wonder that anyone can live a week, much less for years—with this cesspool of death and contagion always within him. The absorption of this deadly poison back into the circulation can but cause all the contagious diseases."

Is It Any Wonder?

that men and women die of premature old age, apoplexy, paralysis, dropsy, consumption, dyspepsia, so-called liver complaint, biliary derangement, Brights disease, or any other kidney trouble? Catarrh, epilepsy, rectal disease, syphilis, rheumatism, female diseases of all kinds and names, spinal irritation, peritonitis, all kinds of skin diseases and impurity of the blood, cancers, and lastly, all kinds of fevers of all malarial or contagious nature,—nearly all have their origin in the colon.

Laxatives Aggravate and Irritate but do not cure

It is useless to attempt to remove this encrusted matter with physics, says the doctor. Laxatives only empty the small intestines, giving temporary room to the overloaded stomach. The colon is left with its deadly accumulation.

There is no man or woman who can read these terrible facts without asking himself or herself, "What am I doing to protect myself?"

What answer can you give to the question? You have seen that physics only aggravate the trouble. What then? Can you afford to let yourself slip knowingly into the conditions so graphically described by Doctor Turner?

How you can protect yourself

In speaking of the intestines, Bernarr Macfadden, the great Physical Culturist and health expert, said, "The bowels are sewage pipes of the human body." No better definition of their function could be made. Your bowels are as truly the sewage system of your body as the maze of pipes and masonry beneath the streets are the sewage system of a city. When the sewage system of a city clogs, no substitute has been or ever will be found for a copious flushing out with nature's cleanser but water. And for the human sewage system the same holds true—water—only water, properly applied, will cleanse your colon and remove the prospect of otherwise cureless diseases.

It is the Internal Bath, properly administered, that removes easily and painlessly the impurities in the colon. And it is the Internal Bath, properly administered, that will KEEP the colon sweet and clean throughout your life.

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MAY 14 1924

Vol. LXXIV

June, 1924

No. 2

The SMART SET



The Strange Fate of Jones

By Charles G. Shaw

JONES had attended another dinner party. As a matter of actual fact it was a dinner-theatre party, and the repast having been concluded, Jones found himself in a plush-upholstered limousine, being borne to the play. "I do hope you haven't seen it," gushed the genial hostess, "it's called 'The Broken Tea Cup.'"

Jones' heart sank into his patent leather pumps, and it was all that he could do to keep from groaning aloud. On eleven different theatre parties he had been taken to "The Broken Tea Cup," and the very thought of witnessing it again was more than he could bear. After all, there was *some* limit to human endurance.

A few minutes later the motor drew up at the curb in front of the designated playhouse and, with considerable confusion, the party proceeded to alight.

Directly to the left of the entrance to the theatre was an excavation—a sight not uncommon in the streets of today—and, as Jones beheld it, his eyes sparkled with a new-born hope. His chance had come. Pretending to trip upon an uneven section of the sidewalk, he suddenly launched forward and fell headlong into the pit. Several passersby screamed, and an ambulance was summoned.

* * * * *

In a state of unconsciousness, Jones was rushed to the hospital. But there was a smile of serenity upon his face.



When Two Lovers . . .

By Harold Lewis Cook

*WHEN two eager lovers lie
Lip to lip, and thigh to thigh,
Where then is the world they know,
Of springtime and of snow?*

*When their hearts are leaves all shaken,
By a fire-wind caught and taken—
Where? No one but they could trace
The pathway to that place.*

*Trees bend there but not the trees
Which this bitter world sees—
Nay, the land of lovers is
Different from this.*

*And the world wherein they met
Is a world they soon forget
Until their love is ended—then
Back to the world of men*

*That seems now so strange a state
To those far travelers, desolate—
Much more foreign than the sod
They so lately trod.*



Art

THE great emotional actress buried her face in her hands and shook with grief. The audience sat spellbound.
"It's the funniest story I ever heard," giggled the great actress to herself.



¶ *A novelette of the footlights. . . .*
¶ *The story of the little gamin who took Broadway by storm, and won another love as well. . . .*

Our Judy

By Lilith Benda

CHAPTER I

SWIFT and smooth rolling, through the Westchester hills, a high-powered cabriolet sped on its way to New York. Fast falling twilight was bringing its velvet tints of gray and mauve to mellow a flaming sunset glow. And there was a promise of springtime, a lazy, lush fragrance that tempered the crisp tang of the air.

In the smartly appointed depths of the car a man and a woman lolled, silent save for desultory phrases, their eyes rarely meeting.

"Belmont track opens next week." The woman spoke. "Wonder how you'll like our Yankee ponies."

"Spring in the offing," he put in, after a full minute.

"And summer on its way. With the play such a hit, and this my first season as an honest-to-God star, DeSola wanted to keep me grinding right through the blue-hell dog days. But I tied the tin can to that bright idea."

There was no answer. She leaned forward, looked out into the faint twilight radiance.

Full lips curled into a radiant gamin grin, red-gold hair that the wind loosened in silken strands over her forehead, a chin always up at a saucy angle, and a tip-tilted nose that seemed to sniff the air in zest for life and whatever life might offer, all gave to her face an urchin quality, a loveliness not of actual feature perfection, and tempered delicately by the faintest hint of trouble in her great, grave eyes. Big, round, of a luminous blue, they ap-

peared always to be widened in child-like wonderment, always shadowed, too, by a certain bewilderment, a certain puzzled inquiry. And her little dimpled hands, while they were folded quietly now, seemed about to resume the fluttering, restless gestures that characterized her, about to intertwist at her breast as if they were lonely for something that had lain often there.

A look of disappointment deepened on her face. "Close the window, please, I'm chilly."

Tall, dark, well-knit, the man who lounged at her side stirred. Broadway, avid for mischievous tattle, had begun to link Judy Carroll's name with that of Bayard Pell, the Englishman. And his very attitude now, uncertainty and pleasure commingled on his finely cut features, seemed to voice a timid, angry protest. It was this boyishness of manner which, combating a patrician aloofness, became Pell's most salient characteristic and chief charm.

He closed the window, stifled a yawn, seemed about to loll back into his corner, when his hand grazed Judy Carroll's dimpled fingers. There followed a moment of stillness, but fraught now with intensity and significance. Then a sound like a harsh sob came from the man's throat. And as if acting without any conscious volition, so abruptly as to bring a little cry of amazement from the woman, in a gesture proprietorial, tender, savage, he swept her into his arms. . . . His lips sought hers, clung there, but only for an instant. . . . Blushing, stammering, immediately he released her.

"I—I beg your pardon."

"*Pas de quoi*, my friend. . . . I've been saying Hail Marys to myself for the last forty minutes in hopes of that kiss." . . .

There was no mistaking the glad lilt in her voice, the sparkle that in a trice had replaced the uneasiness in her eyes. Reassured, he bent over her again, made to brush her forehead with his lips. But she turned away.

"I'll have no lukewarm, maiden aunt pecks on the brow after that last one. . . . I hate all excesses, moderation in excess the worst of all. . . . Oh, Bayard Pell, I'm sitting here all still and stately, but my soul's tripping a mean little can-can for sheer joy!"

She nestled toward him then, interlaced her fingers with his. In a whisper full of breathless quality of a happy little girl, "Just starting out, we two," she breathed. "The going looks good!"

Silence followed. Again it was the woman who broke it with her blithe, breathless murmuring just audible through the subdued purr of the motor.

"Five years ago, there was a girl, and she played the music halls in London. And one night just before she sailed for home, she saw a man looking hard at her from one of the boxes. . . . She liked his looks. . . . There was a she-iceberg beside him, who turned out to be his bride, worse luck. . . . The girl liked his looks—liked 'em a lot."

Ingratiated, he fell in with her mood. "Five years ago," he whispered in return, "a man took in one of the music halls. It was just after he'd been married. There was a girl singing a lot of nonsense on the stage. She had the starriest eyes he'd ever seen, and the sunniest smile. She sang a cradle song, and hugged a papier maché doll tight while she sang. There were queer catches in her voice, and she had a way of handling that doll, and of looking up at you with her lips parted, and her eyes very big. And . . ."

"And they met," Judy put in, "quite awfully casually. But the next day, just before she sailed, along came a cold little formal note of appreciation.

It really wasn't much more than a mash note trying to be high-hat. . . . So she felt sorry for it, and slipped it inside the neck of her bodice, and there it stayed making advances to the little silk undershirts all the way home."

"And time went on."

"Time went on. She became a star, and he had a rumpus with his lady, and sailed over for a visit here. And they've popped into each other's lives again. And they've seen each other often, and this afternoon they've been motoring through Westchester . . . and he's given her a Grade A kiss, and—and the going looks good, and . . ."

THE lights of the city outskirts had appeared by now. Rapidly she pattered on:

"Come to see me tonight, won't you, after the show? You must meet Fatima. Fatima's my mother. I'm afraid you'll find her a trifle on her ear. I call her Fatima because she just eats 'em—Fatimas—between drinks, although I can't see where she finds the time—between drinks, you know. . . . I adore my mother and, squiffy or sober, you'll have to like her too." . . . An arc light threw its shimmer into the car, as they rounded a corner. Judy sat up primly, disengaged her hand. But her nostrils still quivered as if scenting romance, adventure. And—

"Just starting out," she repeated, "we two. . . . Going looks good!"

CHAPTER II

THE curtain went up for the fourth time with enthusiasm welling through the darkened theatre in a sort of big, murmured salvo that topped the hand-clapping. Such unprecedented ardor at the end of a last act, and during the last week, too, of a play's long run, smacked of the naïve homage that a crinolined period paid its footlight favorites of palmy days. It mounted to a shrill din when Judy Carroll slipped from the wings to take another call.

Little and slender, about her there seemed to linger an echo of laughter,

high and clear, and sweet, and of appealing lilts and cadences—tricks of voice and gesture expedient to limelight popularity, but tempered here by a virginial, child-like quality that only enhanced the maternal touch which had become her primary allure. . . . As if half unaware of the plaudits that greeted her, tenderly, greedily she hugged a doll, dressed in baby-clothes, to her breast.

Judy Carroll appeared in simple and very sentimental dramas of the hearth-and-home type. There was always a moonlight scene in her plays, a cradle song to be sung, a papier-maché doll in baby clothes. She had the power of evoking illusions that had been lain aside as ludicrous, of reawakening a glad concern with common precious things—with home fires, and family ties and trifling, everyday events.

Middle-aged baldpates after watching her, turned to the fleshy wives of their bosoms, and saw girls, light-hearted and lovely, whom they had courted long years before. Parents of families were brought back to the days when a halo still persisted over humdrum dealings with paregoric bottles, with midnight yowls and kindergarten hills.

Meteorically, Judy Carroll had become established almost as an institution. She was hailed as "Our Lady," "The Only Judy," "Judy the Mother-Woman," "Judy the Good." Ministers upheld her from their pulpits as an influence of art for the public weal; uplift column writers rhapsodized over her. The great middle classes loved her, named their babies after her, made of her a symbol of the sanctity of the family hearth and the marriage tie. . . .

And closed their ears resolutely to certain racy tales of Judy's rise that ran at intervals but only feebly, half-heartedly, through Broadway cafés, and the columns of little yellow scandal weeklies.

IN the dimmed recesses of the theatre, José DeSola addressed Pell, his silken, muffled utterance just audible

through the applause—"Judy depends a lot upon that maternal touch of hers. Somehow it gets one—gets everybody. It got me the night I discovered her singing lullabies in a shoddy Sixth Avenue cabaret. And I've nursed that maternal touch, ministered to it, developed it, commercialized it, from the vaudeville period when I first presented her as a new queen of the two-a-day through an excursion or two in the cinema field, and on to her ultimate blossoming here on Broadway."

Very straight, very tall, in faultless evening dress, his heavy hooded eyes half closed, DeSola scrutinized his protégée and creation. A pronounced Latin in his late forties, his august bearing, grizzled VanDyke, and chiselled monotones all suggested the grande. New York rather prided itself in this aristocratic Spaniard, a sort of Cæsar of the theatrical world, an authority on Renaissance art, a man of culture and wit and charm who for all his suavity seemed always to hold himself imperiously aloof, for all his poise to give the impression of a being perpetually cannily on his guard.

Those who knew him well, knew that there were times, at rare intervals, when, under a severe emotional stress, an accent harsh, guttural, whining, leaped to the fore, and hands, shoulders and arms loaned themselves to extravagant gesture. Through the beard then his lips showed inordinately full and heavy, and of a vivid, moist scarlet.

"The tragedy of unfulfilment"—again he spoke, and as if to himself, "the wistfulness of an exile." . . .

By way of answer, Pell merely slouched further among the shadows. A gleam of pique shot from the older man's eyes. Blandly he continued:

"The lily on the dunghill. . . . The facts behind the Cinderella legend—that's what they all are, these glorified gutter gamins, from Nell Gwyn down to our Judy here. . . . For inevitably there's a prince in their stories, and inevitably he finds in these alley products—what, Pell? . . . On the one hand a glimpse of an unattainable some-

thing, an unutterably lovely something. . . . On the other hand he satisfies his *nostalgie de la boue*—homesickness for the mud, my friend. A failing men have."

As he finished, the two turned sharply to one another. And at once a latent animosity reflected itself from one face to the other. For each had seen in the other's eyes the same flecting expression—tender, savage, greedy, hurt, hankering and unhappy. . . .

DeSola was the first to make a recovery. A sort of twinge passed over his features like a faint ripple. He smiled mechanically, brilliantly. And with his customary impassiveness, but with a slow deliberateness as well, as if with malice prepense he were seeking to wound the other man, he went on:

"You can't conceive the trouble we managers are put to in whitening the histories of our actresses for home use. In the early days and the palmy days, stage folk were recognized as vagabonds. Now the times have changed. Now they must be so deucedly genteel. It's a source of keen gratification to me"—and he chuckled softly—"that for all her shady beginnings her audiences refuse to do anything save adore Judy . . . One and all, they idolize her, and don't give a hoot, it would seem, whether or no she may have dispensed her favors neither wisely nor too well . . . nor with an excess of discrimination." . . .

"I find your comments in bad taste."

Pell stepped out of the shadows, white about the lips, and with an angry light in his eyes. And at once the other bowed his head.

"I'm genuinely sorry. . . . Retract them, of course."

There was a short silence. Then slowly the two proceeded toward the lobby. Awkwardly, as they walked, hesitantly and curtly they sought to cover for the nonce the antagonism that had sprung up between them.

"Have you plans for the evening?" DeSola asked. "Would you care to come to—"

"I'm due at Miss Carroll's within the hour."

"Ah!" Another awkward pause. Then—

"Your first visit, isn't it?"

"It is."

"You will meet her mother. I've a deep fondness for Fatima. And you will meet Annie Rooney, the cat, a relic of tenement days. Fatima says that Annie Rooney is so homesick for the sawdust on a barroom floor that she always has her kittens in the cornflakes."

Pell met the pleasantry with an inarticulate murmur. Silkily, DeSola resumed:

"Your wife, Pell. I recall her vividly. A most gracious personality. Will she join you here?"

"She's touring the continent, I believe."

Again there was that flash of mutual resentment from eye to eye. With a curt nod Pell turned sharply away.

CHAPTER III

AND among the shadows of the theatre, DeSola remained standing with sunken head, with eyes which, peering through the crowd moving out into the lobby, met nods and glances without so much as a responsive flicker. Sombre, sullen, hurt, but with an air of infinite patience and security, he appeared to brood, to vision certain events that, having fallen in logical sequence, must of necessity proceed, for all the hitches a teasing fate might conceive, to a logical conclusion—to evoke them, as intermittently his eyes sparkled; widened, narrowed, in a distinct panorama before him. . . .

A murky cabaret, overcrowded, reeking with the smells of cooking and alcohol, tobacco, cheap perfume.

A middle-aged and somewhat staid shiny shaker, who pranced mournfully among the tables, shouting, "*Lips that touch liquor can always touch mine.*"

A man faultlessly groomed, with a

grizzled VanDyke, sitting by himself in a corner, and sipping mineral water.

The pause, the hush, the rose light on the platform. A little copper-haired, atin-skinned girl in a dingy costume several sizes too large for her, with a silver cross agleam at her throat, and a doll at her breast.

A lullaby . . . "The Slumber Boat" . . . The delicate untrained voice with its baffling pathos. . . . The gesture, a mere cuddling of the doll, with its strange, yearning appeal. . . . Immature, maternal. . . . Utter quiet in the restaurant save for the whimpering of drunken man. . . .

Discreet words to the Greek proprietor. The chair obsequiously offered, a little later, behind a curtain. A quick patter across the floor, and a tiny figure bounding impudently upon austere and forbidding knees.

"Lo, there, High-hat! . . . The name, I believe, is DeSola?"

Compliments. Desultory phrases. Finally—

"How would you like to be a headliner? The very best circuits, and that, my child, only for a beginning." . . .

The gleam in her eyes then, that mounted to a blaze when long yellow fingers cupped her chin.

"Can that, Spigotty!"

Her quick leap to her feet, and, recovering herself, the little swagger, the long, disdainful scanning of him from head to toe.

"All dolled up, ain't you, to do the why-girls-leave-home? . . . So you want to make me a headliner?"

Ruffled dignity, and a chilly aloofness in his tone. "My car is waiting. If, purely as a business matter, you want to talk it over—"

"Can't. My sweetie's waiting. . . . And he's one damn white little Irishman, let me tell you, mister. He can drink any man in the Tenth Ward under the table. . . . Yes, and for two cents, he'd give you a poke in the beezer."

The pause then. Her uncertainty, her frown, and uneasy laughter. The trouble in her eyes, topped by an air of

quick decision, and tentative capitulation.

"Headliner, huh? . . . Attakid!"

An address scrawled with a pencil stub upon his cuff.

"Look me up, will you? So long, bo!" . . .

DREARY tenement rooms with a distinct aroma of spirits pervading them. The little lurching, sodden-faced mother, peering at intervals through door cracks, antiphonally whimpering and chuckling in a sort of fuddled seesaw of the emotions, appearing always to blink through a haze at existence, and yet with something compelling, matriarchal, in the very grotesquery of her, as if she were a figure of fate moulding, with a maudlin power of yea and nay, her daughter's destiny toward some preconceived and definite end. . . . Her very whimpers now bespeaking approval. . . . Bleary eye meeting heavy-hooded eye in a salute of allies.

Beside a whiskey flask on the mantel, a little plaster Madonna, chipped, discolored, smiling a prim and kindly smile. The touch of peasant awe, of reverence and tenderness, when the girl cuddled the image in her arms. The sudden light thrown upon her cradle songs, and footlight appeal.

"This was the only doll I'd play with when I was a little brat. Wonder what she thinks of you, mister. . . . You know, when I was just fourteen, and beginning to shoot a mean eye at the fellows, and get bids to the Manhattan Casino, you know, I used to come home, and ask this one here to send me a swell guy like they had in the movies. And some day, mister"—this with her eyes wide and rapt—"some day there's a fellow going to come along, and the minute he steps into the picture, it's a good-bye, bo—God-bless-you to you—see? Get me? . . . You won't belly-ache about it? You won't get sore?"

The slow, deliberate way in which she slid from the arm of his chair to his knees, half-smiling with an air of blasé wisdom and tranquil skepticism which put at naught each aloof assurance of

a purely impersonal concern here with a budding career.

"So you got the try-out booked, and the numbers picked already. . . . Attakid! And hooray for us, huh? . . ."

JUDY in the lounging gowns she wore about her home—ivory satin and web lace that stressed the something like a bridal motif, an epithalamic radiance which seemed delicately, impalpably to grace her. . . . A grave, tremulous gladness as if always she were hovering at the very brink of some stupendously thrilling adventure. . . .

Morning sunshine that warmed the tints of silken hangings, of Renaissance enamels, and tapestries. . . . Judy perched lazily upon an august lap and quite comfortably at home there. . . . Indolent half-hours before noontime, spent in pleasant, cheek-to-cheek confab—

"Going big, aren't I?"

And after a pause:

"What's your game, DeSola?"

"Meaning?"

"Rushing me so. What's the big idea?"

"Playing God."

Her slow, quivering smile. "I don't quite get you."

"They say an artist's job, Judy, is to justify the ways of God to men. Now I'd define it rather as playing God: a sort of game of creation. For, malign him as they will, I find Deity of an artistic bent, and working somewhat in the manner of a Michelangelo, in huge, crude outlines, with a splendid incompleteness, and effect of mystery. . . .

Now, for my part, I lean in my feeble way, toward the precision and finesse and step-by-step completeness of a Da Vinci. And you're my raw material, child, you're my job. I mean to make a whacking good job out of you. . . . You will become a great actress. We're just establishing ourselves, depending upon your personality, your maternal touch, maternal flair. . . . But eventually, Juliet, Nell Gwyn, Francesca—"

"Wow!"

A petulant wriggle. "I feel so—so damn synthetic when you talk that way—like you were putting this and that together without even a by-your-leave—"

A light kiss on the tip of his nose. And a moment off guard then, a "Judy!" emitted in a harsh, shrill guttural.

Her long, speculative stare.

"DeSola, sometimes I think you're a bit—er—synthetic yourself. You're a darn high class Spigotty, aren't you?—with a grand manner like a Renaissance nobleman. But get you started on something close to your heart, and out pops De Lancey Street every time. . . ."

And again:

"Why so glum, DeSola, dear?"

"I'm thinking of the time when for a little while I shall lose you."

"What do you mean?"

"Oh, some day, child, a man will come along. Inevitably he'll come—"

Her rapt look then.

"Oh yes, I know. Some day, all of a sudden, he'll just pop in, sort of, and—"

"And then, purely as a method of—er—seasoning, I shall let you go—for a little while."

"Once he comes along, it's good-bye for keeps between us, DeSola, dear."

"Nonsense! I couldn't play God with any measure of competence, child, without realizing that women of your ilk are well-nigh incurable romantics. Through the centuries, one and all of you have labored at times beneath a sort of—sort of—er—well, a sort of mama-home-and-babies complex. And the only way to cure you of it is to give you a fling at it. It's the sort of thing that induced the great Rachel to make herself ridiculous, and strip her salon walls of nudes on the ground that they might endanger the morals of her new-born bastard. . . . And you shall have your fling at it. You shall go a-gypsying into bathos, and have your sentimental carnival time . . . then snivel a bit, and come home to common sense and me."

"Let me off your lap, you—! Your line annoys me this morning."

"Judy, Judy, he will come—shy, and romantic, and reverent—the sort the story-books always make the prey of transmissible hussies. Matter of fact, it's they who prey unconsciously upon the romantic natures of the poor hussies."

"He will come."

"Yes, he'll come, DeSola. . . . There was a fellow I met in London just long enough to say 'hello' to—oh, 'll!"

"He will come, and then for a while you will leave me."

"He will come, and then it will be good-bye, bo—God-bless-you between us, me love—for keeps."

"For a while—for a short while, my child."

AND only a few hours before, a voice over the telephone, hushed, jubilant, all a-thrill:

"Lo there, DeSola! Time's up, dear! For he's popped into the picture! And you're off my visiting list. . . . Good-bye, bo; God bless you!"

The theatre was empty. De Sola grunted heavily, yawned, outstretched his arms, walked through the deserted lobby with a patient, abstracted air

CHAPTER IV

IT was much the usual living-room of an ultra smart apartment that Pell entered a half-hour later, but enriched by lavish hangings, rugs and cushions, all in mellow hues of rose and blue, and gold. Blatant incongruities, too, caught the eye.

There was a thirteenth century enamelled beaker, hammered out of pure gold and decorated with figures illustrating scenes from the life of Saint Agnes, exquisite, priceless—and filled to the top with cigarette butts, and nibbled candies.

Over the table an altar cloth was flung, a superb example of Franco-Flemish art desecrated by a slice of cheese that reposed as if in sacrilegious glee there, beside a dill pickle with a huge chunk very obviously bitten from it, and a half-empty whiskey decanter.

A film of dust hung over the furnishings. The keys of an open piano were smudged with grime. A lean, fleasy cat arched its back on the divan, yawned, and began solemnly to scratch itself.

Hung on a sort of bracket against the wall, the five dolls, that had figured in the various phases of Judy's stage career, formed an oddly significant background now, as perched upon the table from across the room she faced the man in the doorway.

Immobile save for a faint tremulousness, poised as if to run to him, and yet lingering there, slowly the color flooded her cheeks while through a long moment fraught with a promise and fragrance the two looked at one another. He made a step from the doorway, and halted; she swayed toward him, drew back again. And uncertainly they smiled, a little awed, like two beings at the beginning of something lovely, and hazy, and ineffable, who paused for a little, all shy delight and wonder.

At last he came to her, bent over her uplifted face. But her brow twisted before something she read in his eyes. She jumped to the floor.

"Something's wrong, Pell?"

Taken off his guard, the man blurted the truth: "DeSola—he's been making offensive—"

Before the rage that, while he was speaking, had twisted her face into a snarl, flooded her cheeks to a purplish hue, he stopped short. "How—how rotten of DeSola!" She choked, "Giving me the low-down, eh? Get that one started on anything that's close to his heart, and out pops De Lancey Street!"

Breathing heavily, shaking, all the mignon stateliness of her obliterated beneath an onrush of gamin fury she stood silent, then caught up the Renaissance beaker from the table, hurled it with all her strength across the room. Chips of the priceless sapphire and jasper enamelling lay scattered on the floor.

The act appeared to appease her. "Now he'll call me a rotten little vandal. He bought that thing."

But Pell averted his eyes, somewhat aghast and all a chill repugnance. Again

it was as if some agency were forcing him not to cover with polite evasions what lay close to his heart. "My dear girl, my—my dear—you're not vulgar, are you?"

"Vulgar?" With the word, Judy bridled. "Surest thing you know I'm vulgar. Look here, young man—"

Her eyes were sparkling angrily, her nostrils dilating. She swayed exaggeratedly at the hips, jumped up on the table, lit a cigarette.

"Now just look here. . . . I've been trained to put on side with the best of 'em, and play the shrinking, aristocratic ingenue. I've handed out an interview on the Czecho-Slovakian invasion of the drama that was ninety per cent words of four syllables. I've Ritzed it in Newport, I've been mushed over by the dowagers there. . . . But just the same, remember, I'm a Second Avenue brat, it's a Second Avenue tenement I hail from with the smell of beer everywhere, and the old pie wagon backing up every so often at my neighbors' doors. Remember, I used to shoot crap with the newsboys, and dodge the bullcops, and play hookey from school to go picking up chauffeurs on Riverside Drive, if they were classy chauffeurs, in classy limousines. Though I wasn't popular, because I wouldn't sit in the front seat, and I always used to swipe the orchids from the flower-holders."

"Not really, Judy?"

"Surest thing you know, my upstage Britisher. And I had a plumber for a beau once, and if you have any objections to plumbers there was another who handled the old lead pipe for very different reasons"—with a significant gesture—"beaming butlers for the family silver—see? But don't misunderstand. I'd no idea he was a second-story man. He betrayed a young girl's trusting heart. I had every reason to believe he was a perfectly respectable, high-grade, front-door expert who went after the swag with his chin in the air, and his gat on his hip. He deceived me. He hadn't any social standing. He even had me buffaloed with phony notches on his gun."

"Why tell me—"

"To let you know right at the start you're dead right—I'm vulgar."

But in a lightning change of mood, the indignation and bravado went out of her voice. Some of his hurt bewilderment transferred itself to her face. Her hands fluttered out in a helpless gesture.

"Pell," she whispered, "Bayard . . . my dear—"

And as his eyes remained averted, she whispered on:

"Things happened—ugly things happened. May as well come clean at the start, because you'd hear some day. It's crude stuff. . . . And if you feel you can't stomach it, there's the door, Lady Dainty! . . . But if you think, if you feel—"

Her voice dwindled into a sob. She raised big, blue eyes, wet and pleading, to his.

The man turned to her abruptly.

"That Spaniard, DeSola?"

And slowly the color ebbed from her cheeks as she merely looked at him in reply, her eyes very big, her lips quivering a little. While for all the aversion and disgust that flooded his face, there was something else as well, a mere shade of understanding and surrender.

Minute followed minute. Through a long stillness the two stood, and a sort of magic pervaded the room, a magic age-old, relentless, elusive, turbulent, and tranquil, too . . . a magic that made itself felt in pounding pulses, in awed eyes and rapt faces, finally in queer, disjointed murmurings.

The man's face had softened. "For all that," his voice was very low, and as if half-willingly he slipped an arm about her, "for all that, there's melody about you, Judy, and lustre, and fragrance."

"There's melody about you," she echoed, "he said it, my Englishman just said it. . . . Melody and lustre and fragrance."

Lightly she ran from the room, and returned at once with the little plaster Madonna in her arms.

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brat, won't you, Pell? For she wasn't a bad kid. And look—this is the little Our Lady she used to come home nights and pray to. She used to pray for a swell guy like they had in the movies. It was her highest idea of somebody grand and god-like and gorgeous, and good—awfully good. . . . And now he's come!"

He drew her a little closer. "You're mine now, is that understood? What's past is past, and it's done with. There'll be no more of this "Our Judy"—no sharing you even with the memories of plumbers or—anybody else!"

"Right!"

Starry-eyed she was carolling now, "Attakid! My heart is no soviet. It's just a sort of a little speak-easy on a side street, where the hootch has a fair kick. Have a drink on the house!" And she lifted her lips.

As she saw his brow knit again, "I didn't mean to be flippant," she put in. "You—you can't go for a stroll along the primrose path except in goose-step, can you, Pell? And even then, you're the sort that stubs his toes against stray moral precedents. You—"

"Psst!"

A sibilant hiss startled the two.

In the doorway a little plump woman stood, loose-fleshed, uncorseted, swaying from side to side in drunken dignity, chirrupy and maudlin, shaking her fingers coquettishly at the two.

She was in bedroom slippers, a gayly flowered wrapper about her, spotted and frayed. Wisps of hair, part gray, part bleached a gaudy yellow, hung over a little puffed face, its nose brightly pink, its loose lips parted in a sunny, vacant smile which alternated with high-pitched snivels.

There was something sinister in the sight of her, something which narrowed Pell's lips and made his fingers tighten protectingly over Judy's. It was not that the features, sodden and puffed though they were, bore so uncanny a resemblance to Judy's, not that the little lurching figure seemed a living symbol that mockingly dismissed as a mere

rose-tinted prelude this new romance. But the wagging finger expressed a positive, though a good-natured disapproval, and the matriarchal, prophetic air about the little woman seemed already to be laughing this chapter from her daughter's odyssey.

"Ladylike, ain't she? . . . I say, you—whoever the hell you may be, she's ladylike, ain't she?"

Her lispy, little, high voice died into a snivel. She began to weep forlornly.

"Yain't friendly, you two. . . ."

And as if a trifle piqued by their silence she waddled away, humming as she went, "Ta-ra-ra-ra-boom-de-ay"—the ghost of a song in the ghost of a voice.

Judy looked up uneasily. "That's Fatima—and I love her. . . . And if you love me you'll have to love her a little too, Pell. . . ."

For answer he cupped her chin with his hand, brought her head closer until it rested where already it seemed at home, against the rough tweed of his coat sleeve, ran his fingers through the masses of coppery hair.

"It's soft and silken as the down on a baby chicken's breast."

His voice had become oddly husky. And all at once he caught her to him, held her close, without any hint of transport or greed, but as if here were something priceless and precious that had been entrusted to his care.

"Judy, you're such a winsome siren with that madonna in your arms. You look like a little 'Our Lady' yourself—an 'Our Lady' of chuckles and sighs."

And after a moment, "Judy, dear, you evoke the heroic illusion. . . . You make me feel most awfully remarkable and important. . . . A man's in love, I believe, when he wants to order his girl around a lot, and show her off a lot, and hide her away . . . when he wants her upon a pedestal . . . when she's his mother-confessor and his doormat, his showpiece and his secret . . ."

When he spoke again his eyes were moist.

"God knows why, dear, but can't you see, too, that this can't become just a

passing affair. . . . Judy . . . I want you to be good, dear . . . I want you—can you understand? . . . Upon a pedestal, up at a casement, and cheering your man on. . . . I'm lonely and hungry for something very sweet. I want to be mothered and made much of. . . . For you to make me think of a home and a son, and such strange stuff. Tonight, for the first time in my life, sweet, I feel that I'd like most awfully to have a son . . . Judy—"

The tears were rolling now, unheeded, down her cheeks. And all her rosiness had faded into a white translucency.

A phonograph began to play. Faint, blurred, the melody of "Slumber-Boat" drifted into the room. Judy's face became ecstatic.

"Fatima's turned on the lullaby that was my first hit in the cabarets. Playing a cradle song, Bayard, while our curtain is going up. . . . Playing a cradle song. . . ."

Boyishly, very shyly, "I love you, Judy," he whispered.

Softly she was singing as she swayed into his arms:

*"Baby's fishing for a dream,
Fishing near and far—"*

A glad sob checked her—then:

*"Sail, baby, sail,
Out upon the sea—"*

Again her voice broke. And again, "I love you," he whispered, "love you must awfully, Judy."

In a measure, then, the spell snapped. . . . Solemnity and awe merged into sheer gladness. Judy broke into silvery wavelets of laughter. And Pell kissed her on her lips, on her wet eyelids, on the tip of her tip-tilted nose.

Finally his face sobered: "I may as well tell you that my wife and I have found marriage a fiasco, and the situation intolerable. As a husband I've given Enid rather a rum deal. She's interested in diplomatic parleys, and statecraft and such things—and there's

a ruddy-faced member of parliament—awfully decent chap—who's waiting for—well, for our associations to be dissolved."

"Let's not go into that now."

"No, let's not—let's just drift for a bit, because it's such delightful drifting, Judy. . . . Mine now, aren't you, sweet?"

Jubilant, she swayed back into the span of his arms, while for the veriest fraction of an instant, her eyes, lighting upon the image that stood on the table, sobered. And:

"Much obliged," she caroled—"much obliged to you, dear. . . ."

CHAPTER V

WEEKS passed. Broadway gossiped. But, curiously enough without malice now, in whispers free from the customary hiss. The little scandal weeklies too were strangely silent. It was as if the stray glimpses alone that were had of Judy and her Britisher established them of a hallowed elect. They were like beings drifting—lazily drifting through a golden prelude, with events in a drowsy abeyance, and the high gods, whatever the ultimate issue, in good humor for the nonce.

Abruptly Judy changed her style of dressing. Under DeSola's tutelage she had been gowned always in good taste, and very simply. But now she discarded *jeune-fille* frocks, and ranged the shops on the alert for subdued elegance, for dark colors, and austere lines. The mass of red gold hair was brushed smoothly into a close coil, the lip stick employed but frugally, while her manner of walking changed, became a steady gait, all grave precision and mignon dignity.

Her town cabriolet she abandoned for an unobtrusive sedan. "Because it has a family air," she explained to Pell, "a sedan has. That other thing was too swanky. Now I can run downtown for a facial or go to pay my bootlegger's bill, and look for all the world like a dutiful wife and mother on her way to the kindergarten to see how the

youngsters are getting along with their a-b-c's."

Every morning too, she slipped away on foot to attend early Mass.

The piano keys were clean now—the rooms radiated neatness. The two slovenly negro maids were ousted, and replaced by a pair of staid and middle-aged Bavarians.

And the sound of Judy's singing, and the tinkle of piano keys came in little intermittent snatches through the days. Pell brought her bits of Scriabine, of Debussy and Strauss. Valiantly she struggled with them, only to culminate always with one of the cradle songs that seemed the very leitmotif of her existence, seemed to epitomize all that she was, all that she stood for.

SHE was playing very softly, crooning under her breath one morning, when Fatima waddled to her side, eyes bleary, and with the little puffed face sour and sad.

"Give us a little jazz, Judy," she whimpered shrilly, "give us a little pep, for Gawd's sake, girl! Or give us one of the good old-fashioned songs; give us 'The Man Who Broke the Bank at Monte Carlo'"

And as with only a vague smile in response Judy crooned on, "You're turning my home into a morgue, girlie," her mother continued. "what with them stuck-up Heinies in my kitchen, and the whole place reekin' so of furniture oil I can't even smell my own breath and feel I'm at home. . . . All the licker whiff's gone out of the rooms, baby. . . . 'Tain't healthy . . . 'tain't natural. . . ."

She put her arms around Judy's neck, went on in an onrush of grievances. "Gawd, pet, but I'm homesick for the time when there was the scraps of a dinner, and a couple of lunches, and three days' breakfasts all piled up together on the kitchen table, with a big papa cockroach takin' mama and the babies out on a dollar beer racket all over the joint. . . . Don't you owe nothin' to your mother, pet? Have you

forgot her entirely for that high-born son of England that's makin' himself so God-almighty at home here?"

Judy turned to her then, smoothed back the stray wisps of hair from her forehead, flushed when the whimper mounted to a grim admonitory tone: "Where's DeSola? What you done to DeSola? Judy, Judy, you got to watch your step. You're losin' your head, and when your kind and my kind starts losin' our heads, we're slippin', baby. . . . Lady-like and friendly and common sensible—that's your cue. . . . Find a gentleman that'll take care of you, tie up all you get in real estate, and land him so he'll marry you in the end. . . . Take it from your mamma who has your happiness at heart, that's your game. . . . And what have you done with DeSola?"

Judy merely looked at her and smiled very gently. Judy was always gentle now, always gracious and friendly, for all a trifle remote, as if she were looking straight through a mist toward a hazy ultimate loveliness that put everything else, every event, every person, every issue into a subsidiary background.

HER looks changed. Within a few weeks she had lost decidedly in weight. Bones appeared about her throat and shoulders that far from lessening her prettiness, gave her a fragile appeal. The veins at her temples and wrists were traced delicately and distinctly now against a fine snowy pallor. And there was a change in her expression so slight as to be almost intangible, yet so distinct as to suggest actual feature readjustment. A raptness and awe shone from her face, with a humility that in itself was high pride and majesty, tempered merely by humility. It was the look that has shone countless times on the faces of women newly aroused to high-hearted romance, and upon the faces of little nuns too, newly professed and consecrated to ineffable mysteries. A look like the violin music of Brünnhilde's awakening. . . . Abashed, aloof, a triumphant look, with only a little

fevered hint of perplexity and trouble lingering about the eyes.

The fevered look burned very brightly when Judy's glance strayed to the papier maché babies that hung from their brackets on the wall—burned brightly too when twice a day she put a fresh flower into the hands of her Madonna. "Don't you go back on me," she whispered once, "you won't go back on me, will you, my dear?"

From across the footlights as well, the change was apparent. A new stateliness invested her presence, a poise and repression. DeSola had cause for gratification in his protégée. But DeSola had become morose of late, and irascible. He was continually biting lips that seemed to have become tinged with an even brighter scarlet—and the extravagant gesture escaped him more often, more frequently the guttural whine stole into his chill utterance.

It was DeSola who, relegated by Judy to a minor role in her whole-souled absorption with a supreme outcome of events, none the less constituted himself *soi-disant* prophet as to what this outcome would be.

CHAPTER VI

JUDY sat in a low armchair, intent, with a tyro's zeal and awkwardness, upon a bit of muslin she was sewing. A dove-gray frock, austere simplicity save for its fichu of Duchess lace enhanced an impression of placidity and pleasant concern with pleasant humdrum events. Her feet were placed precisely upon an old-fashioned footstool. Under her breath she hummed as she sewed.

Her brow puckered as the sound of a key turning reached her from the hallway—only a moment later to narrow in dread. . . . Suave, silent, smiling, José DeSola stood in the doorway bowing with a ceremonious mockery, his eyes mere gleaming slits.

There was a long silence. Then—"You big, four-flushing mock!" she commented, a trifle blankly.

"You are not over-gracious, Judy."

"I'm expecting Bayard. And you'd better be a good fellow, and run along—see. You're *de trop*, DeSola. . . . And hand over that key!"

He stepped further into the room. "A domestic idyl de luxe," he intoned. "Romance and red roses. Do you intend to go on with this sort of thing?"

"Surest thing you know. And you git! Understand? . . . The key, please!"

"Romance and red roses," in a silken monotone he seemed to fondle the words. Then of a sudden fiercely, the foreign accent very strong, "You're not going to go on, you can't go on. There's wreck and ruin and terrible unhappiness ahead for you if you go on."

"That's my look-out. And DeSola, my prince of ancient Castile, I wish you'd stop smacking your lips as if I were a big berry just out of your reach."

"You are not forgetting that there's a wife in the situation?"

"Lord, no. I'm not forgetting."

"A charming woman, a rich woman, and an extremely clever woman. . . . You haven't a chance against her, Judy."

"Time will tell."

A silence ensued to be broken by a whisper so silken, so subdued as to strike a sinister note.

"Do you realize that a man of Pell's standards, no matter how he try, can never quite condone—er—certain facts, certain stories, that will filter out to him. How do you think this will end?"

"That's in the lap of the gods."

"Give it a moment's consideration, child. How—"

Judy jumped to her feet. "DeSola, I can't be bothered with you. You stick to an agreement, and get out of here, and make it snappy! It's all going to turn out beautifully. Beautifully . . . somehow. . . . A divorce, I suppose. But at any rate"—there were little, happy breaks and catches in her voice now—her lips were tremulous—"at any rate: it will come out all right in the end."

All the trouble and fear had left her. She stood before him, her hands serenely folded, with that remote, abashed, invincible look on her face. It was a look in its very docility and high faith potent to bruise and inflame this man whose eyes, beneath their hooded brows, were constantly shifting, blinking, narrowing now. . . . It was a look, fleeting, fugitive, that dwindled into misgiving, into amazement and fear.

"You belong to me." The man spoke in a little, high-pitched stilted voice. His hands gripped her shoulder—kneaded her soft flesh there.

"DeSola—you poor fool—you—"

"I know, I know. I agreed to let you have your white romance, and carnival hour. But this is going too far, this is lasting too long."

He caught her hand, and a second later was twisting the wrist, running his long, yellow fingers along her arm and shoulder, kneading the flesh again.

"Hands off!" Chin up, she appeared on the instant to have summoned all her grit and spirit to stand her in stead. "Hands off, I say! The other fellow's goods, you know, and not negotiable."

A sort of repressed spasm twisted his shoulders and lips. All trace of his smooth, liquid utterance was obliterated in a harsh, guttural mouthing. All trace of the polished gentleman vanished, all trace of culture and refinement. It was an uncouth, elemental who gesticulated extravagantly, moistened his lips hungrily between phrases, and seemed pitifully, futilely to be floundering for something that had eluded him.

"Lookit here, you! . . . How about if I dispute that? How about if I claim a first lien, eh?"

"How about if I find your claim not quite—er—legal, me love?"

"I mean to resume title sooner or later. . . ."

His arm spanned the woman's waist. She twisted herself free, laughing angrily.

"Hands off, I tell you, De Lancey Street! You make me very tired."

"Lookit here!" He held her only

the closer for her struggles. "That De Lancey Street stuff—it's there, you know. . . . Your East Broadway jokes. . . . They—they got a foundation. . . ."

Something like a sob topped the words, something that quieted Judy and brought an intent look to her face.

And hurriedly, stumblingly, in guttural undertones broken by high, sharp sighs, in a grotesque outpouring of pain and reproach, of pleading and behest, he went on:

"My name is really not DeSola. Never mind what it is, except it began in a Brazilian jungle. . . . I come from a family of serfs. Y'understand? I feel you should know this because you are the woman I love—y' understand? Thirty years ago I was a greenhorn pushcart peddler on the lower East Side."

"Didn't I say there was something synthetic about you?"

"Thirty years ago I was peddling garters and dill pickles . . . and borrowing dimes and quarters from the other peddlers if I was lucky. . . . I've known hunger and horror. As for the rest, the struggle up, it doesn't matter much. What matters—"

"What matters is that Bayard is coming soon, and this thing between us is cold and dead as per agreement. . . . I hate to be nasty and unsympathetic—but won't you go?"

"Lookit here!" Again convulsively he gripped her shoulder.

"I've told you all this that don't seem important to let you know I'm no throwback of a Renaissance noble who wants you for his mistress, but an East Side huckster, y' understand?—who doesn't think of you as a tasty duck of a girl, but who tries so hard, Judy, to keep himself from thinking of a wife and a table set for dinner, and of watching his children grow. You'll never fit into the dream, for we East Siders are a little particular about our wives. . . . But life and tradition have trained this quarter-Spaniard to content himself with alternatives and a *faute de mieux* philosophy, so that goods

slightly shopworn, if of a rare quality do not repel. . . . I offer you my name, Judy—not the one that ends in *sky*—my protection, and something that your idealistic Englishman can never offer . . . a complete understanding of all the quirks of destiny and blind chance that go to make up such as you. . . ."

He sighed, walked to the other end of the room, and turned. There was a hint of agony now in the impassiveness that had replaced the snarling hurt—a sort of weird majesty. His hands ran caressfully over a Renaissance altar cloth on the table, fondled, for an instant, the enamelled beaker. And when at last he spoke, it was with his customary chill dignity:

"My child, there was a man who wrote of the Renaissance I love. And he wrote of an artist who painted Madonnas who shrink from the very pressure of the Divine Child, and plead in faint undertones for an earthy, peasant baby like those among whom, in a rude village, this intolerable honor came. Their faces are saddened by the shadow upon them of the great things from which they shrink. . . . Your face too, is shadowed by the great things from which you shrink. For when you were born there was the usual wicked fairy who hadn't been invited, and who, after the others had apportioned all the good gifts, maliciously granted you the intolerable honor of awakening the men of your life to hazy hankerings—to silly, lovely, absurd illusions . . . queer disjointed ideals and aspirations that muddle and merge and confuse themselves—."

He stopped short, sighed and continued as if he were quoting from an italicized page with a pause between each word:

"*Confuse—themselves—into—the—image—of a son.* . . . Such a woman takes a deal of bullying in her day."

He came to her side. Tenderly he stroked her hair. Tenderly he spoke.

"There are luckless women who appeal to men primarily as the mothers of their sons. . . . Your qualifications for the job are high, my dear—"

Then with a heavy grunt, "But your references ain't good," he finished.

The woman winced a little. DeSola took up his hat, made for the doorway.

"I leave you for a little while longer to your romance and red roses. I leave supremely confident, my dear, because you are something so much more important than the woman of my life—you're my life job, and in a fashion, my creation—do you see? And that renders me almost immune to the appeal which wreaks havoc, and makes you 'Our Judy' to the rest. In a way, you are irretrievably mine. . . . I am making plans for 'Juliet' next winter. . . . Good-night, and a pleasant evening, child. . . ."

He laid a key on the table beside her. His eyes once more were gleaming slits, with that touch of an eerie majesty which left Judy silent, motionless, uneasy and contrite, he left the room.

BUT there was no hint of trouble in the fragments of song, the silver laughter, and snatches of time-hallowed nonsense that followed an hour later.

"Let me see your profile, Judy. . . . We look at one another so much I've had no chance to examine your profile. . . . It's a little lyric of a profile, sweet. . . . A masterpiece in miniature. . . ."

"Then kiss your masterpiece, Bayard. Kiss her lyrical nose. . . ."

"I want awfully to take you to England, Judy."

"Me, too. I want to go."

"I want you in my home. It's a rather splendid old place, Judy. Georgian—"

"Regular edifice, huh? Great big grounds? I'll love it, Bayard. . . . Smell of new-mown lawns, and autumn leaves—"

"We'll breed Irish hunters—"

"And Irish terriers. Have 'em the same color, so's to match, and look stunning when we're out riding."

"I love you, Judy."

"Let me sit up on the arm of your

chair, and put your head against my shoulder . . . so . . . ”

“God upholstered you skilfully, Judy.”

“He had you in mind.”

CHAPTER VII

AND SO it went on, like the opening bars of some grand sonata played dolcissimo, lovely, lulling, all muted wood music and faint chimes it seemed, and as if it were ushering forth some magnificent allegro, while no minor undertones gave warning of the sudden change of key, the whining, crashing discord that intervened.

At eight o'clock Judy sat waiting beside an open window, with a faint breeze wafting the aromatic freshness of late spring into the room, and a Maytime fragrance about the sight of her, serene-eyed, smiling, in a frock whose delicate green suggested the tints of burgeoning leaflets.

When the clock chimed the quarter hour, her foot was tapping the floor in light impatience.

At half-past eight, some of the tranquillity had left her face, and she sat there motionless, save for the rise and fall of her breast at each quick breath.

Again the quarter hour chimed, and now a certain dread was quivering at the corners of her mouth, and shadowing her eyes.

Nine o'clock. . . .

A quarter after. . . .

The door-bell rang. Her face lighted. A moment later Pell came in.

Over his forehead his hair hung untidily. His eyes were bloodshot, his skin damp-looking, and of a greenish pallor. A smell of brandy pervaded the room at his entrance. He breathed audibly, and as if each breath were causing him pain.

With a shambling, stumbling lurch that was yet not the gait of drunkenness, he approached Judy, made groping gestures for her, clutched her shoulders, dragged her from her chair, and with never a word, his red-rimmed eyes never once meeting hers, he kissed her,

hungrily, greedily, in a sort of doomed fashion, as if for all his helpless clinging, with every kiss he were putting her further away from him.

“Come, my dear—tell me about it, Bayard—tell your girl. . . .”

She spoke quickly, ever so lightly, in a quaint, expressionless monotone. And her hands on his shoulders were giving him little motherly pats, while the smile remained on her white face as if grotesquely frozen there.

For answer he ran his fingers through her hair, pressed her head against his shoulder, where it had lain so often. He appeared like a being utterly dazed and confounded, baffled, and bruised, but oddly enough not like one stricken by some overwhelming grief. The eyes that never once met hers, for all their mute pleading, seemed to tell of a secret in which she might not share, a secret edifying, amazing, awesome. . . .

“What's up, Bayard? Tell your girl. . . .”

At that he slumped awkwardly into the armchair, pulled her to his knee, and with his face buried in the soft flesh at her breast in muffled undertones—

“I have a son,” he told her.

NEVER once did her little hands cease their protective patting. And without an outcry, or tremor, the swift, light monotone went on:

“Come now, my dear, you mustn't make up nightmares. Believe you're ill, aren't you?—or you've had a shot too much of hooch, huh?”

“Why isn't it you I'm going to?” he half-shouted in return. “Why in spite of everything, are you just—just somebody one spends one's spare hours with? I tell you . . . a son . . . only a few streets away from here. . . .” And his voice falling to a helpless childish whisper, “Judy, I have a boy. . . .” he finished.

Not by the veriest quiver or twist did her face betray emotion, save that a glistening translucence had overspread its pallor, and above her upper

lip, like a ludicrous little mustache, a row of perspiration beads stood.

"And when did all this happen?"

"About ten days ago."

"Where?"

"Here in town."

"When'd you hear?"

"Only a couple of hours ago."

"Wife send for you?"

"Good Lord, no. . . . Enid would never send."

"Then how—?"

"A note from my mother. . . . You see, when Enid bolted—she was sportsman enough to see this thing through. Enid's the frail, intense type. And my mother, it seems, took affairs into her own hands. My mother's the most rabid little sentimental, with a genius for putting through her sentimental schemes. From her note it appears that she'd heard of you, and conceived the idea of bringing Enid to New York, and giving me this sort of surprise in order to—well, to patch up things, you see. . . ."

"And so they both came over. . . ."

"A few weeks ago."

"To double-cross me."

"Is that quite fair?"

As if, without any volition on her part, some force were snatching them away. Judy's hands left his shoulders. She began to laugh, without a sound, but in a spasmodic fashion that brought a purplish flush to her face, and shook her frail frame from head to toes.

"You a papa! . . . Does kind of—put the kibosh—on things, doesn't it? . . . Yes, taking it by and large—I believe—believe—being handed out . . . a pretty raw deal. . . ."

Her voice fell to a whisper as she pulled herself together. "So it goes; . . . Mrs. Bayard Pell. Safely delivered of a son. Mother and child both doing well."

The man's blood-shot eyes met hers for the first time now. "That's just it, Judy. They're not. My mother says Enid had a hellish time of it, and the youngster's frail. If anything were to happen—"

"Oh, nothing will happen to spoil the

moral of this tale. God's turned Methodist. He's—"

"Judy!" With a big break in his voice he caught her close. "Judy, I want to see this boy of mine."

A trifle coldly she drew away. "Time enough for that. He's probably red and snivelly and homely right now."

"Judy!" And the hands that seemed, in their awkward, groping, helpless gestures to have become bigger and misshapen, caught her to him again. "Sweet, I want to see my boy. What'll I do? It's not—not just that my wife has a child and it's my moral duty to go to her. . . . It's that there's something waiting for me, something that will carry on the traditions better—"

"Get out of here!" Resentment and bitterness swept over her and merged into an outpouring of rage and grief. Her little fists beat against the table until drops of blood shone at the torn knuckles. "Go on! Get out! There's the door! I'm none of your bleating Magdalenes! Go to your lady and your pedigreed puppy! Get out, I say!"

But for answer he merely slumped further into the chair, looked up at her with so much of weariness and entreaty and bewilderment in his blood-shot, tear-blurred eyes, so much of helplessness in his groping gesture that on the verge of another outbreak she fell silent.

"Judy, I love you so much. Tell me what to do."

"Do?" She blinked, stood stock still for a full minute, while slowly as second followed second all the distraught fury and anguish dwindled—misted into rapt tenderness again. "What did your mother ask you to do, dear?"

"The sanatorium—only a short distance from here. Wants me to come—right away. . . ."

"Well, then . . . well, then—" And now, very daintily with a tiny lace handkerchief, she wiped the blood from her knuckles, patted her upper lip, where, like a droll, diminutive mustache, the perspiration beads stood—

"Well, then, you're going to run right along, and say 'Hello' to that

youngster of yours. You're going to see Enid all nice and white in her nightie, and you're going to hold her hand very tight while the two of you view the heir apparent. And you're going to feel that after all there's something kind of holy about it and you'll not say a single word, but you'll be telling 'em—telling the two of 'em—that you're sorry for things, and you'll be good now."

She nodded her head, detachedly like a marionette, full ten times, gave herself a little shake, turned to him, brisk, matter-of-fact now, steady-eyed.

"Come, run along now. Get out of that chair. You look messy and limp. You look like the soul of a bar-room gone wrong on near beer. And you'll scare the kid with that brandy breath. There's ammonia in the medicine chest. I'll get it. And cloves and coffee beans from the kitchen. Munch 'em on the way over."

As if carried away by her deft control of the situation, he sprang alertly from the chair. And for a little space she hovered over him, ministered to him, ran to and from the room, busied herself with his necktie, smoothed his hair, adjusted his collar—her smile very gentle, her eyes very big. Stray phrases passed between them.

"Judy, is five pounds little for a new baby to weigh?"

"Why, I believe seven or eight's the average—"

"Does that mean he'll grow up frail?"

"Course not. He'll turn out another lean, rangy Pell, you'll see. . . . Shall I ring for a taxi?"

"I can make it as quickly on foot. . . . Judy, my mother says he looks like me—but he has Enid's blue eyes."

"Their eyes are often blue at first. Then they turn dark by degrees. . . . Got your gloves? Got a clean handkerchief? I—I want you to make a good impression, dear, on your boy."

"It's been lovely—here with you, Judy."

"Very lovely, Bayard."

They had moved across the room,

toward the door. Judy's voice never once wavered from its light, crisp monotone. As they passed the bracket through, where the five dolls in baby clothes hung, she looked up, and the frozen smile curled a little further on her lips. . . . Looked up, her eyes very wide, and very bright . . . curiously friendly, too, and puzzled. Hunters have seen in the eyes of a doe with its breast shot away, the look that lay in her eyes then.

They were approaching the door.

"I'll phone you, sweet, first thing in the morning."

"Don't forget. . . . Make a good impression. . . . Man of family now, Bayard."

He opened the door, bent over her, touched his lips rather shyly, rather reverently to her forehead, and in turn her lips fluttered, twitched, struggled for words . . . sent him, finally, a whisper, as the door closed.

"If you don't think it would be starting him off in the wrong direction—will you give him my love?"

CHAPTER VIII

RIGID, motionless, for a full five minutes she stood there, while never a tear glistened, and the frozen smile still twisted her lips. Finally, her eyes curiously ablaze, she gave herself a little shake, and walked quickly through the apartment to the room where, huddled over a whiskey decanter, Fatima dozed.

Judy tweaked the rosy nose, dropped a kiss on her mother's forehead.

"Lo there, old side-kick! Give us a swig. Bayard's wife, mom, she's gone and had a baby. How's that for a goat-getter, huh?"

The bleary eyes blinked into amazement. But Judy, always smiling, from across the table checked the first, faint whimper, as she drained her glass.

"Oh, I'm not licked!" There was a new note in the monotone, a loud crisp shrillness. "Not licked, but sore—blue hell sore. She swiped my baby, mom. I want that baby to be my baby. . . . He's going to smell chloroform. Drown

out the smell of my roses. Whispers, tiptoes, night lights. . . . That dam' wife of his, mom—she copped my kid."

A look on Fatima's face silenced her. The little woman rose, waddled around the table, grief and dignity filtering somehow through the puffed and sodden features.

"You poor little—poor little—" then very shrilly, "poor little motherless thing, you!"

As if hazily aware of the futility of her comfortings, she sidled off, only in a moment to be chuckling again.

"Forget him. Too aristocratic. Piker. All he'd ever keep is his dates, and the only time he'll ever give you anything worth having is when he gives you the gate. You need a drink, pet—a good, fat snootful. Come along, girlie, come and get a little *schutzen* on with your old-timer."

"I want that baby for mine." Judy filled her glass again, and went on in the same, flat, calm monotone. "I want to mix the castor oil with the orange juice so it won't taste, and blow his funny nose, and give him his bath—and I think I want to go to bed."

She rose quickly, turned quickly away, the little, unsteady figure of her mother half-lurching, half-waddling after her. And the precise loud accents continued to ring with a sort of ominous tranquillity through the rooms.

"I want that kid for my kid. Want to cry out my eyes when his curls are cut, and teach him his 'Now-I-lay-me's' and give him a fiver for his first black eye, if he licks the other guy, and a tenner if he has to say 'uncle.' . . . You think I'm licked, don't you, huh? . . . Forget it! . . ."

Methodically now, she was pulling the silken spread from her bed—methodically she slipped out of her dress. Fatima whimpered helplessly as she picked it up from the floor.

"I look like blue-hell itself."

For a full minute Judy stared into the mirror, into blazing eyes and gray, smiling lips that bespoke, somehow, the tenement termagant with the veneer torn for the moment relentlessly away.

"And yet—" She stepped out of her satin underslip, and with a mere shred of foamy laciness against the pearly petal radiances of her skin, lazily outstretched her arms. "And yet, Fatima, a Grade A bimbo, huh?—calculated to please the eye, and stir the pulse."

She drew off a stocking, and scanned her white knees and pink toes. "*Nature might stand up, and say to all the world, 'This is a leg!'*"

But her voice broke a little. And the rapt look stole back into her eyes. It was as if the deliberate survey of herself had bidden her take heart and make herself lovely for her lover. Very precisely she rubbed cuticle ice over her finger nails, rattled on:

"First thing in the morning, mom, call up Léon's, and have 'em send over a girl for a steam facial and a shampoo. I want my hair to shine and smell good when he comes—for he's coming in the morning. Hand me the cold cream, mom."

She jerked her hand away from Fatima's timid caress, then:

"No comforts and caresses, mom. You see, I can't break down. Mustn't break down. Look like a hag if I break down. He says I'm dewey and fragrant. Have to look dewey and fragrant when he comes in the morning. Long odds against me with that damn family re-union going on now. So cut out the comforting, mom."

She curled into bed, patted the silken coverlets. Her glance happened to stray to the image of the Madonna, smiling from the niche in the wall, its prim, kindly smile. Only, then, with a convulsive twist of her features was she forced to fight back the tears.

"Mom, that one there; she's given me the low-down."

"There, there, baby—"

"Always thought she was kind to lovers, and made the skies blue for 'em, and—and put the shimmer—"

"Have a little bracer, Judy. Buck up, baby—"

"Well, I suppose she's got to do her job the way she's told. . . . No, I don't want to kiss you, mom. Will you take

out the light, and open all the windows wide—and git, dear?"

Deliberately, almost brusquely she shut her eyes tight, lay very still, and made no protest when Fatima drew a low chair to the bedside, lit a cigarette, and huddled close to her daughter.

A night stillness stole into the room. And wide awake, Fatima smoked countless cigarettes, her eyes sombre and brooding, her little nose as brightly pink as ever, her cheeks as puffed and sodden. Yet in the darkness, a grim dignity, a vast regret, a sweetness oddly poignant, appeared to flicker and play over her features.

Half an hour passed. The little figure on the bed never stirred. . . . An hour. . . . Then quietly, Judy's voice sounded. "Think I'm licked, Fatima?"

"Now, baby, now—"

"I love him so much. Hold my hand, huh?"

CHAPTER IX

It was a fragrant, dewey Judy, who stood looking out of a window at ten o'clock the next morning, wide-eyed with expectancy, her chin at an angle as if the better to catch a first whir from the telephone bell.

All dauntlessness and verve she seemed, exquisitely groomed, delicately perfumed, smooth and satin-skinned, and as if love, and cosmetics, high faith, and a facial massage, a shampoo, an ivory satin dressing-gown, and perhaps a prayer or two had all conspired to invest her with an allure that was like a strain of melody, that was pervaded with a sort of epithalamic motif. . . .

Two hours later her eyes were as bright, and her smile as confident. . . .

And when night came, all undaunted, she hummed random snatches of song, ran the buffer again over her finger nails, splashed in the bath-tub, brushed out her long hair. At times her eyes strayed to the image of the Madonna and for the merest instant then there was that on her face, harried and baffled, which offered this solicitous grooming process as a sort of last shift, a final

propitiatory rite to the little lady who, from her niche, smiled always a prim and kindly smile.

At her bedside, the night through, again Fatima smoked, whimpered, brooded.

And all through the next day, the high spirits persisted, save that a hint of bravado seemed to manifest itself at times in the up-tilted nose and there was feverishness in the flushed cheeks. She laughed oftener, more shrilly, drained, several times, the little whiskey glasses her mother at intervals proffered.

On the morning of the third day, at Fatima's summons, DeSola came.

His eyes mere slits, with an old-world ceremony, he bowed in the doorway. And from across the room, Judy nodded brightly, made a light formal gesture of greeting.

"Behold the fly in the ointment, Judy."

"Fly in the ointment, nothing—ace in the hole, my dear!" Lightly she sang:

*"Your name will be mud, like a punk
playing stud,
Without that old ace in the hole."*

"I can see Fatima's been blabbing the news to you, DeSola. . . . But just can the funeral air, huh? For he's coming back, you know."

He shook his head. "Curtain's going down on that emotional debauch, Judy."

"He's coming. Maybe today, and maybe tomorrow . . . but he's coming." Her lips curled a trifle contemptuously as she scanned him. "Still after me for your blushing bride? . . . Still want me to play Juliet next fall?"

At that he strode to her, gripped her hands. "Pull yourself together. The thing's finished. And if each Cleopatra must have her Antony to moon and snivel over her for a while, remember there's a Cæsar who prizes her."

"But Cæsar's wife must be above suspicion. Does Cæsar agree to stretch a point? That the idea?"

"Exactly."

"Marriage, domesticity, and perhaps a litter of little DeSolas, huh?—Why, DeSola!"

For he was shaking his head vehemently and a tear was rolling slowly, somewhat pompously, down the riddled cheek.

"You shut up about children." The words came in a shrill whine. "Won't be any children—y'understan'?" Then, recovering himself, "Children, my dear, loom prominently in the dream I've put behind me—the dream that concerns itself with a wife, and a table set for dinner, and of watching the little ones grow—the dream of an East Sider whose name begins in the jungle. . . . I offer you a *nom de guerre*, and all it implies. As Mrs. DeSola—"

He stopped short, pain and disgruntlement on his face. For Judy never heard him. One hand was at her breast, the other trembling violently as she adjusted the knitted bootie that had slipped from the foot of one of the bracketed dolls. While DeSola was speaking the door bell had rung.

And into Judy's eyes there had stolen the look, at once rapt and hunted, of a creature who, aware that her high hour is upon her, hovers irresolute for an instant, and in dread.

Very slowly, very deliberately, as if by a supreme effort of will, her lips curled into a smile. And with an air of abstraction she waved DeSola away.

He snorted, wheeled, strode heavily into the living-room, pushed an easy chair before an open window through which the morning sunlight streamed. And as he hunched into the chair, all at once he appeared old, and feeble, and without hope, and unspeakably weary. The long yellow fingers shook like a dotard's when he outstretched them into the sunshine.

CHAPTER X

In the very heart of a great shaft of noonday sunlight Judy stood, all radiance and lustre and loveliness, all triumph and gratitude, with her hands

outstretched to welcome her lover back to her. . . .

And slowly, as the man crossed the threshold, every vestige of color ebbed from her face. And through a long silence that was somehow full of sound—dull, cruel, thud-like—from across the room the two faced one another. The very folds of bridal satin that enswathed Judy seemed to go limp, and at last the tremulousness of her outstretched hands resolved itself into a quaint formal gesture of greeting.

In Pell's aspect there was not so much harassment and fevered disarray as the composure of an overwhelming distress, a composure which gave him a greater dignity, a more potent appeal. With a sombre tenderness he scrutinized the little figure before him.

"Within two hours, Judy, I'm sailing for home."

Without a trace of pain or surprise, as if very casually, she nodded. Very casually, she spoke:

"Romance, Bayard. . . . She's a street slut and a fraud. She tipped us the glad eye, didn't she?—and when we winked back, called in the cops."

Another silence. Then, "Within two hours," he repeated, "I'm sailing—we're sailing—for home. . . . On the *Britannia*."

Another silence. Then softly she laughed.

"*Britannia*, eh? And the bugle will sound, and the gangplank go up, and you'll be tipping the steward, and seeing about the deck chairs, and getting your seats at the captain's table while the band plays 'The Roast Beef of Merrie England!' . . . Well, so it goes, doesn't it?"

At that he came across the room, faced her, with his hands on her shoulders.

"Judy, sweet," he whispered. "that youngster of mine—he wasn't strong."

"Wasn't . . . wasn't?"

Though she stressed the word, she appeared unable quite to grasp its significance.

"A fragile little fellow, Judy. Like

a tiny, shriveled sick dwarf, centuries old, he seemed. . . . But babies have very winning habits—like curling their fingers around one's thumb. . . . And he was my son. I can't explain to you just how I felt—but all at once I knew I was very fond of that son of mine." . . .

He stopped short, gulped, proceeded: "I've just come from the boat. In an hour I return. I'm to instal my wife in the bridal suite, and that son of mine, in a sort of a—sort of a—" bringing the phrase out in a sharp, short breath—"some sort of a ship's refrigerator, Judy," he finished. . . .

Then after an instant, "All at once I knew I loved that son of mine. . . . Poor little devil, died in my arms. . . . We can't go on, can we?"

"Why . . . Why, no. . . . All right. . . . Of course not. . . . Can't go on."

HE took her in his arms then, pressed the little face against his shoulder. His whisper was just audible:

"Judy, but I've loved you! And I love you, sweet, and in a way I'll always love you. It's because I've loved you so that I'm leaving you, Judy. . . . Judy, there were things I'd never thought of before—homely, priceless, holy things . . . tradition, honor, a home, children, a shoulder-to-shoulder alliance—things of the very fabric of love, and yet stronger than love itself. . . . And you awakened me to them, sweet, and it's because of that awakening that I must love you. . . . Judy, the little fellow died in my arms, and—and there was the woman there. She'd had a dreadful time of it. . . . There she lay, all white and frail, and—and mangled, and waiting with such hungry eyes, sweet, for me to tell her I was sorry for the mess, and ready to make a good go of it with her. . . . Judy, it was because I've loved you so that I knew what to tell her—and told her, dear." . . .

Very gently she released herself from his arms. "Good-by, and be good, and God love you, and git!"

She crossed the room, made again her quaint, formal little gesture, as if this time in gracious dismissal.

"Judy, it's been very lovely."

"Very lovely."

"And within an hour—"

"You sail. The old *Britannia* sails. And there was a kid, and the kid cashed in, so git—for there's nothing left to say."

He took a step toward her. Her lips were trembling, her eyes tear-laden. Yet through this farewell time, some of the old verve and sweetness seemed to be hovering about her, to be playing, a little listlessly and with a kindly irony over the forlorn little face.

"Judy, but I'll miss you. . . ."

A tinge of the old sparkle lighted her eyes, "Say that again, just once again. . . . What you said that first evening. You know—'There's melody'—say it."

"Melody about you, sweetheart, and lustre, and fragrance."

Slowly she nodded her head. "Think of me when you tell your boy good-by over in England there. Tell him I send my love. In a way he belongs to me. In a way he—he has twin mothers. For he's mine by right of option, you know—Enid's by default."

Pell was beside her now with outstretched arms. "It's all been so—so pleasant, Judy."

"And there was a time there when the going looked pretty darned good, wasn't there?"

Her voice dwindled, shook. A quick sob, and she had twined her arms about him. "It's a damn rough five minutes, this good-by time." . . .

And at last then he gave way, and completely, to his hunger for her. Her head fell back as he kissed her. His arms crushed the frail form, his hands entangling themselves in masses of long hair, tearing the fragile dressing-gown from her shoulders. For a long moment, through a vast stillness, they stood immobile in the very heart of the great shaft of noonday sunlight.

"I've got to take you along—or else I've got to stay. I"—

"Sail, baby, sail—"

A broken, chirrupy voice halted him. Through a door crack, Fatima was peering, like a little maudlin figure of fate, whimpering Judy's old song:

"Sail, baby, sail,
Out upon the sea—"

She giggled with embarrassment at the sight of them, ducked her head, disappeared.

Blankly for an instant, the two looked at each other. Their arms fell inertly.

And as the strain of the ironic lullaby faded, Pell turned away. Without another glance at Judy, lurching, stumbling, he went from the room.

CHAPTER XI

JUDY winced at the thud of the closing door, shivered a little, wiped away the perspiration beads that glistened on her forehead, over her lips. Haphazardly, awkwardly, her hands made their gesture of grave dismissal, only to flutter back to her breast—like living entities, searching, yearning for something, that had never lain there. Finally she stretched them straight before, shook them violently as if she were shaking water drops from the fingertips, as if she were shaking herself free from something very beautiful, something very cruel—

And all at once her smile flashed full, with all the old-time brilliance, but with an odd, strained doggedness too. As if there were something in the nature of a final courtesy yet to be performed, lightly, swiftly, she walked to the window, threw it wide.

A hot, high wind billowed the draperies, tossed her loosened hair, whipped the torn dressing-gown close about her. Chin in the air, smile radiant, her arm shot high into its triumphant gesture as she wished him God-speed. . . . And very gracious she seemed, very gallant and serene . . . waving from a casement, speeding her lover on—sending him a final salute, speeding her lover on away from her!

. . . to other adventures, to other arms. . . .

"Attakid!" she called.

At last the frail form went slack. And it was as if with light passing of her finger over her face she were smoothing away the smile that was becoming little more than a twitching grimace—smoothing, patting, kneading it until only a little tremulousness remained at the corners of her lips.

There was still a spark of the old tenderness and peasant awe when she took the image of the Madonna from its niche in the wall.

"You little fourflusher," she whispered, "handing me the raspberry like this after all these years!"

Outstretching her hands, she let the image fall to the floor. The little crumbling crash was capped by the cry that escaped her—a sound harsh and horrible, and strangely unhuman, a cry that seemed to tear through her breast as if it were wrested by some extrinsic agency from an automaton. . . .

"Steady there, my girl!"

At the other end of the room, an armchair drawn to a window, appeared to make an ungainly pirouette. Wheeling, it disclosed DeSola, hunched and huddled in its depths, shivering a little as if he were chilly, intertwining his long yellow hands. Very fragile he appeared, and worn—and crumpled, somehow. . . .

"Steady, girl!"

The sight of him alone seemed to invest her with a measure of self-control.

"So there you are, old ace in the hole!"

A ripple of laughter escaped her. A quality uncanny and poignant crept into the quicksilver, fevered breathlessness of her, into the light, rapid pell-mell patter of her phrases.

"So you snooped, and heard it, huh? Boy's gone, DeSola. . . . Gave me the air. . . . His love for me awakened him to deep, and priceless, and holy things, and these deep, and priceless, and holy feelings have landed him back in his lady's lap. . . . I suppose

it's divine justice; and God has to hold down his job. . . . But, DeSola, I think God gets a lot of fun out of God-damning. . . . Get me? . . . Keeps him in form. . . . Setting up exercise. . . . Daily dozen. . . . Isn't it a poke in the nose, though, I ask you? . . . Ain't it a goatgetter, huh? A grand, gorgeous, vengeance-is-mine, heaven-sent kick in the panties?"

She swayed uncertainly.

"Steady!"

The huddled heap in the armchair appeared to unfold, to elongate. Always twisting and untwisting his fingers, DeSola approached her.

"Steady! Buck up! Guts, my girl! And none of the Sardou whines! Surely your pride forbids you to mourn a miserable cad who—"

"Be still!" Shrilly she broke in. Then, in a whisper:

"You think he's an egg. And he, poor devil, he thinks so, too. But me—and that one there. . . ." And her eyes fell to the tiny, upturned face of the beheaded Madonna that, as if quite unruffled, continued from the floor to smile its prim and kindy smile. . . . "We know better, we two. . . . We know better." . . .

Irascibly, DeSola grunted: "No more of this maudlin mooning over a four-flushing cad—"

"Where do you get that 'four-flushing' stuff?"

"I don't find the welchers exit exactly in line with the standards of a man of honor—"

"Hell, who wants a God Almighty for a lover? He was my good boy, my hurt, puzzled boy—my boy who meant so well. . . . Kind of a man that gets you here—"

She laid a hand on her breast. Then, as she lifted it to her throat:

"And here, somehow. . . . Bit of a Judas, if you like. Bit of a jackass. But, hell, I say! Who wants a saint?"

And after an instant: "The baby, DeSola. . . . The poor little baby in the ship's icebox. . . . And—"

She stopped short with a little sharp sound. For the heavy-hooded eyes

above hers were gleaming with tears. And the crude majesty of the man seemed only the more potently to reveal itself for the pain on his face, and the incessant twitching of full, moist lips.

Gingerly she fingered his coat sleeve. "What now, DeSola? What next?"

He made no answer.

"Juliet?"

He nodded.

"Spouse of your bosom?"

Again the nod.

All a light, laughing agony, her eyes fever-bright, and the rosiness deepening in her cheeks, it was as if she were looking for a little into a long-dead past before she broke again into a hushed, harried helter-skelter of phrases.

"Home in the country. . . . Regular edifice. . . . Georgian. . . . Lots of grounds. . . . Smell of new-mown lawns. . . . Autumn leaves. . . . Irish hunters to ride. Breed terriers, too. . . . Huge chairs with big arms to them. . . . Why, my dear!"

Talon-like, the long fingers had gripped her arms, were digging cruelly, fiercely into the soft flesh there. At her exclamation, at once he released her, and looked at her with so dazed and lost a look that the faint ripple of her breathless laughter was silenced, and a little note of affection stole into her voice.

"DeSola, I'm such an egg. Why don't you just chuck me as a bad bet? Why do you bother—"

"Because you remain my job, and my creation, evolving to its logical completeness! Because it's still my pleasure, Judy, to play God!"

The harsh grunt that escaped him while he spoke seemed on the instant to recall him to the exigencies of a self-conceived rôle. His shoulders squared. The spare frame appeared to tower. All an eerie augustness, protectively he put an arm about her, stroked tenderly with his long fingers the vivid marks on the pearly flesh which these long fingers had made.

"Seasoning, Judy, seasoning. . . . I've been able to view this idyl of yours

as just so much seasoning: For with all your loves, my dear, you—er—never had a first love, if you can catch what I mean. Never went through the lyrical interlude, the exquisite *débâcle* of it. . . . I couldn't permit life to defraud you of that supreme kick in the panties which was your due. . . . All a question of seasoning. You will make a superb Juliet. . . ."

As he paused, the tinkle of her laughter sounded. All a thistledown lightness she appeared, save that her hands were clenched so tightly, and her breathing had become so rapid and sharp.

"And as Mrs. DeSola," he went on, "you will find bitterness fading into an amiable skepticism. Life will become amusing, Judy, and interesting, and full of zest. . . . Simply a matter of seasoning. . . . You will attain to a genial tolerance and aloof good will—to the viewpoint of a *haut-mondaine*. . . . And then, dear, I'll star you in comedy, high comedy. . . . Seasoning, you see. . . . A superb technique! A flawless comedienne." . . . His voice sank, became husky. "Judy, it's the torn, patched lives that are the richest and fullest. With me you will find all the glad serenity of disillusionment."

A little tenderly, a little disdainfully, she gazed the riddled cheek over which, for all his air of aplomb, the tears were coursing.

"This serenity—you're a long time finding it, my poor DeSola."

Ceremoniously he bowed. "It is a last, charming adventure whose savor I've meant always to sip—with you, my dear, with you."

Daintily she slipped from his encircling arm, then fluttered to the table. "As a pledge of troth more fitting, less trite than an engagement ring. . . . In token, DeSola, of a resumption of amenities and re-establishment of the *entente cordiale*, may I offer—"

In her open palm lay a doorkey.

DeSola chuckled. "Oh, but without a doubt, child, a little more seasoning, and your technique will be superb!"

Something appeared to snap then, the

august bearing of the man to crumple, to ooze, until all hunched and shivering he fell back into a chair outstretched unsteady arms, cried out in harsh, guttural entreaty:

"You've had your gypsying, y'un-derstand? Come home, now."

The woman swayed a little toward him, winced away. Almost inaudibly her laughter trilled. And her lips were moving rapidly, while only a little murmur sounded, mounted, evolved, as if by a supreme effort of will, into whispered articulateness.

"Be an awfully good fellow. . . . Take an I. O. U.—time being. . . . Wouldn't it be . . . better form?" . . .

Huddled further into the chair, he only cried out more loudly

"You've had your fling. Come home, I say."

She made a step toward him, swayed uncertainly, stumbled. And the trill of laughter mounted, deepened, until again the terrible cry that seemed to tear through her breast escaped her . . . rose, quivered through the room, echoed . . . then of a sudden dwindled to a sob, into another—and another . . . harsh at first, then softening, mellowing into the assuagement of tears.

She was taking stumbling, unwilling steps now toward him, making little groping gestures as if toward a haven which she sought desperately, futilely, to evade, and in a moment she lay crumpled in a little heap on his knees, in a moment his arms were about her, and as she sobbed on, at last her face buried against his shoulder—

"My boy's gone—my boy's gone. . . . And I loved him so. . . . The little baby. Oh, the poor baby in the icebox. My baby. . . . All over . . . all finished. . . . DeSola, you're such a comfort—DeSola, I loved him so. . . ."

The words dwindled into a babbling incoherency, the sobs soothed as they shook her. Little by little she became quieter, while one hand pushed him from her, and the other clutched his coat lapel.

Inscrutable, motionless, DeSola ap-

peared to brood over her, his eyes puckered into slits.

Through a door crack, Fatima was peering now. Her whimper dwindled, drifted into a hushed chirrup of unequivocal approval. Again, as once before, bleary eye met heavy-hooded eye in a salute of allies.

Until at length their glances wavered from each other to the little, crumpled figure that sobbed softly on.

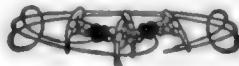
And for just an instant then, the brooding tenderness on the faces of these two who loved Judy became overshadowed by puzzlement and pain. It was as if for just an instant they envied her her heartache, as if for just

an instant they were paying tribute to the passing of something high-hearted and gallant, something fragrant and fugitive that was still now.

It was as if they sensed the ringing down of a curtain, the launching of an epilogue, zestful, perhaps, rich, significant, yet none the less an epilogue. . . .

But even as Judy sobbed, her eyes on an instant grew wide. . . . Pell!—Pell!—He was coming back; suddenly she had the vision of his return. . . . Back—to her! She knew it. . . .

And meanwhile there was Juliet . . . and that high comedy! Her laugh tinkled, as gay and impudent as an April shower.



Sixteen

By Helen Hoyt

*Outreaching, withdrawing,
Sallying in retreat;
Calf and yet tremulous,
Sad, merry, sly, sweet;
Hastening, delaying,
Safe and pursued—
She could not follow
Her own mood.*



A SWEETHEART is a diamond; a wife, a pawn ticket.



And I Learned About Women

By *Earl G. Kuhlen*

ETHEL was different, quite different. She used poor grammar and chewed gum. One evening was enough. I left before the dance was half over. Never, never, never, will I have another blind date. Ethel meant well but she was sadly misinformed. All her remarks started with, "Say, listen, kiddo—" She was terrible! . . .

But then came Evelyn. Evelyn was a "keen number," everybody said so. I agreed with them. I was enormously pleased with her. She dressed like Irene Castle and danced better. She never lost her temper and was always jolly and companionable. Oh, yes, she was ideal except for one fault, one monstrous fault. She was an awful gold digger. Little Evelyn knew more ways to spend money than any two girls extant. She knew the telephone number of every cab company and its branches in the city of Chicago. I wouldn't be surprised if she knew them in New York and Boston too. She was acquainted with all the better places to eat and dance, the better they were the more expensive they were. Evelyn was always hungry, her appetite was enormous. Evelyn was a very nice girl,—very nice, indeed, for a millionaire. I received her wedding announcement the other day. She married a plumber. . . .

Marjorie was not pretty nor was she attractive. She was beautiful, however. I think she was the natural reaction from Evelyn. She seemed comfortably old fashioned and modest. She was really too good for me. I never did quite reach her level. I gave up trying, in sheer boredom. Marjorie always seemed about to fall apart and break or something. She was too frail and saintly. Oh, she was sweet and pleasant enough, at least until she fainted dead away watching an exciting movie. That was a dirty trick! I don't like girls who faint on such a flimsy excuse. . . .

Now Florence was not like that. She was very well built, rather athletic looking, and quite healthy. She was also beautiful, although in a different sort of way, being attractive at the same time. She too had one fault, she was dumb! Beautiful but dumb, a perfect example of the type. That girl's head must have been a blank, a perfect vacuum, a total loss. She had one or two stock phrases which she shuffled about and handed out as her "line." As a conversationalist she was absolute zero. I always felt worn out from my oratorical efforts whenever I went out with her. It was like trying to talk to a house full of empty seats. Maybe in her native habitat she talks herself out. She is a telephone girl. . . .

I really liked Frances. She was a peach. Good looking, good dancer, intelligent, full of fun, yet the soul of propriety: she fulfilled every conceivable expectation. She was one in a million. She had no faults. You could take her anywhere and she would fit perfectly. She was modest, and unassuming and yet a girl you'd be likely to notice in a crowd. She never traveled in fast company, yet she was not a reformer. She never smoked, she didn't tell risqué stories. She was perfect. Yesterday she was arrested for bootlegging. . . .

Flame

By Albert Payson Terhune

YVONNE GAIGE went out of her house on Madison Avenue that Saturday evening, too blindly angry to slam the front door behind her. She and Harvey Gaige, her husband, had had the most tumultuous quarrel of their three years of married life.

The quarrel had begun over a trifle; as do the most horrible quarrels, nine times out of ten; and it had fanned itself to vitriol fury. Things had been said by both Yvonne and Harvey which never could be unsaid. More of them were said by him than by her;—more things and louder things; and, toward the climax, more unforgivable things.

At last, with Yvonne, rage swept past the speaking point. She was drunk with wrath and with the sense of damnable ill-treatment. So she ended the insane squabble by rushing to her room. There, goaded on by hatred, she vowed to herself she would not stay another minute under the same roof with the brute to whom the law had fettered her. Skewering a hat viciously on her head, she snatched up a wrap and made for the street.

As I said, she did not slam the front door behind her. This was, for once, too big a moment for slammed doors.

So, Harvey, smoking and trying to calm himself with a stupid book, in the library, at the rear of the house, did not hear her go out. He supposed she was still in her room sulking or in hysterics. And he was crankily determined to let her stay there. She might stay there, forever, for all of him. He was angry,

through and through. Far too angry to repent, or even to remember, most of the abominable things he had said.

Yvonne went out into the ice-dank air of late evening; walking fast and aimlessly. Her hot brain was in a confused frenzy. Its only clear thoughts were that never again while life lasted would she go back to Harvey Gaige; and that the future's one bright hope rested in punishing him in such a way that he would carry the scar on his soul until that soul itself should be consumed in well-merited hell fire.

You who read—perhaps you have never been in such a maniac rage. On the other hand, perhaps you have. In any case, enough of you have, to make you understand something of Yvonne's ferocious longing to humble and torture Gaige and to grind every atom of his overweening self-esteem into the muck.

Most people have such insane yearnings, once in a way. And most people have time—by the grace of God—to simmer down to sanity before opportunity is offered them to glut their silly revenge. Yvonne Gaige was less lucky. As you shall see.

She was swinging wrathfully along Fifth Avenue, faced blindly uptown, when a man in evening dress loafed out of a solemn-looking clubhouse and came idly along the street from the direction opposite her.

His careless glance was caught by the stately graceful figure approaching him; and then by the energetic tensity of her walk. Thus, as she neared him, his eyes were

upon her in amused interest. A street light was just above them. And, with an exclamation of astonishment, the man intercepted the fleeing woman.

"Why, Mrs. Gaige!" he cried. "What's the matter? Is anything wrong? What on earth are you doing out here, alone, at this time of night, in such a tearing hurry? Is Harvey—?"

"Harvey!" she echoed, venomously. "Please don't speak of him to me! I never want to hear his name again! And please let me go on. I don't want to be rude, but I can't talk to anyone, just now."

She stamped past him. Thus, she did not see that his first expression of civil curiosity had changed, in a flash, to something far more vital.

Deane Carter had known the Gaiges ever since their marriage. He and Harvey had been business associates on Wall Street, even earlier than that. And, from afar, Deane had been more interested in Yvonne than in any other woman he had ever known.

That was all the good it had done him. For, beyond a very mild and tepid flirtation, she had evinced no interest in him. Perhaps this was the chief reason why Carter, who usually found women pliable, had desired the more this one woman whom he could not conquer.

Carter knew human nature. He knew woman-nature. He knew, from long experience, that a violent quarrel with her own husband sometimes will make an angry wife as easy to win—while her resentment lasts—as would a dozen glasses of champagne. Conjugal strife is ever the lover's best ally.

On the instant, Deane Carter saw his chance. And he hastened after the fast-departing Yvonne. Carter was no bird of prey. But here was someone he cared for;—someone who might never again be in so favorable a mood. Harvey Gaige was an old acquaintance of his; but in no sense a

chum. He was not betraying a friend or a brother. The game seemed fair.

"Mrs. Gaige!" he said, ranging alongside her. "I don't want to intrude; but I can't let you go on wandering alone up Fifth Avenue, at this hour; and in such excitement. I am going with you, whether you like it or not. I won't bother you by asking questions or talking to you at all, if you don't want me to. But I'm not going to leave you alone like this."

He spoke with a simple earnestness. And his wish to guard her seemed to the tormented woman fine and chivalric. It proved at least that someone did not think the awful things of her that Harvey had voiced so noisily, a half hour agone.

Harvey! And again her fury swirled high; along with her craving to punish her husband,—to wound him mortally, at whatever cost to herself. On wild impulse, she spun around to confront the solicitous Carter.

"You're in love with me!" she said, harshly, almost challengingly, as her level eyes met his. "At least, you've been trying to make love to me for more than a year. You did it very tactfully,—very unobtrusively. But I knew it. A woman always knows."

She paused for breath. The man choked back his stark amazement: and replied steadily:

"That is true. I love you more than anything else in the world. It has been so since the first time I met you. It will keep on being so, till they bury me. I—"

"Do you want me?"

She fairly spat the question at him.

"More than anything and everything else," he made hot reply.

But she did not lean toward him: nor he toward her. From their attitude and voices they might have been quarreling.

"Then take me!" she demanded.

The man grew white. He trembled slightly.

"Is that a joke?" he asked.

"Yes," she returned, a short laugh,

uglier than a curse, breaking in on her reckless words. "Yes, it is a joke. A joke on Harvey. A joke he'll remember. Do you want me, on those terms?"

"I want you on any terms," he answered, falling into step beside her.

"Very well, then," she said, with dull apathy. "I'm here."

For a few paces they moved on in silence. Then Deane Carter halted and hailed a taxi-cab. Wordlessly, Yvonne entered the vehicle, and Carter seated himself at her side.

II

In a few minutes, still without speaking, they mounted the steps of a discreetly ugly building. On its rubber mat, Yvonne read the lettered name, "Hotel Royal." The name meant nothing to her. Yet a twinge of dread crossed her raging mind.

She set her teeth to keep firm her jarred resolution. But, fight for it as she would, she could not feel any longer the savage joy that had been hers at the thought of betraying her husband.

Deane left her in an alcove while he crossed to the desk. Then, in the wake of a small but super-sophisticated bellboy, he and Yvonne went toward the elevator. On the sixth floor they were ushered into a large and severely plain sitting-room; evidently part of a suite; although the doors leading into it were modestly closed.

They were left alone. Carter took an eagerly impulsive step toward her. Then, though she did not shrink back or repulse him, he paused. Her eyes were sick with revulsion of feeling. Her face was ghastly white. And, being a reader of women, Deane read her expression as though the thoughts behind it were writ large before his gaze.

"You've repented of your fiery plan to punish Harvey!" he accused.

"I have not!" she denied, a trifle more loudly and vehemently than the occasion seemed to call for.

"You have!" he contradicted, a spasm of sharp disappointment twisting his face. "You have! You're sick with fear. You'd give your right arm to be clean of this mess. Don't deny it. Look at yourself in the glass, there, if you think I don't know."

"I hate Harvey!" she declared. "He is vile! No punishment is cruel enough for him. I'm not flinching. I—"

Despite her every effort at courage, her voice trailed away; and she began to shiver.

"Perhaps you're not flinching," raged Deane. "But I am. I told you I wanted you on any terms. Well, I don't. No grown man would. I won't so much as lay a hand on your shoulder. Not through any decency, but because I don't want to see any woman shrink away from my touch, as if I were a leper."

"I—"

"You don't!" he stormed. "And you don't hate Harvey Gaige, either. Oh, you think you do! And you think—or you *did* think—it would be a fine thing to tell him you had given yourself to another man. You gloried in picturing his anguish over that. Well, let me tell you something;—no woman ever yearns to torture a man that way unless, at the bottom of her heart, she worships him. Indifference or hate wouldn't make any clean woman sacrifice herself as you came here to do. Nothing but a love that was the biggest part of her."

"No!" she denied. "No! I—"

"You adore him," insisted Carter. "That's why you want to punish him. And he adores you; or he'd never have taken the trouble to drive you to the point where you thought you loathed him. I saw how things were the moment I met you tonight. And I was willing—yes, crazily eager—to take advantage of it. But not now; not when I can see you shaking and cringing and looking at me as if I was some sort of foul beast. Lord!"

I'd rather make love to a corpse!
Now let's clear out of here!"

"I—I—"

"If I'm not smirking and consolatory," he said, more gently, "just stop to think what I'm losing. Then, if you have a drop of blood in your own veins, you can figure out what a jolt like this means to me. Let's get out! Downstairs I'll put you in a hansom and send you home. I—"

He ceased speaking; caught by the odd new look in her face. She was no longer listening to him. Her delicate nostrils were sniffing the heavy air of the room. Her ears were strained to catch the meaning of confused sounds which penetrated through the discreetly thick door leading into the corridor.

Deane's own excitement and his own thunderous voice had made him oblivious of external sound or scent. Now, pausing, he was aware of both.

He ran to the door and flung it open. In rushed a bellying wall of smoke. In, also, rushed the sounds of myriad screams and shouts and frenzied appeals for help.

Not more than a very few minutes had been needed, after the discovery of the well-started blaze, before the entire old tindery structure was in flames. Up the elevator shaft roared a solid column of red-gold fire. The stairways were cut off in like manner. Through the drafty halls billowed strangled smoke, sucking flame along in its wake.

Incidentally, scores of panic-smitten folk were learning the grim truth of the old, yet never-old, text:

"The wages of Sin is Death!"

Deane Carter dashed to the nearest window; flung it open and leaned out. The fire-escape balcony was in front of him, by some rare good luck. But, from window after window, directly below, a hundred famished tongues of fire were belching forth against the iron ladderway.

He turned back; and faced the petrified Yvonne.

"Stay where you are!" he ordered.

Running into an adjoining room, he reappeared, hauling along a bed-blanket. This he carried into the bathroom and held it under the double tap of the tub. Thence, coming back to Yvonne, he proceeded to wind the chilly wet square of wool around her.

"Fix it in front of your nose, so you can breathe through it," said he. "Breathe as seldom as you can; and always with your nose. Hold your mouth shut. Above all, don't struggle. Keep your head!"

The swathing task was finished. Picking up the tall body with its mummylike bandage, he draped it over one of his broad shoulders. Then, stepping out through the open window, he began his descent.

The iron rungs of the ladder were blisteringly hot to his touch. The ascending volume of smoke blinded and strangled him. Yvonne's weight, at each downward step, waxed more and more unbearably heavy. From a window he passed by, a spray of yellow fire seared his mustache and brows and lashes and burned his clinging hands to the bone.

Far below—millions of miles below—the black street and square were packed tight with onlookers, their upraised faces shining queerly pink in the fire-glow. The shrill whistles of engines and the bawled commands of fire-chiefs arose to Deane in a dizzying blend of racket. In agony, and with his strength fast failing, he moved on.

III

HARVEY GAICE threw away his unlit cigar and slung into a corner the book he had been trying to read. It was no use. He couldn't keep on being wholesomely angry at Yvonne. Every time he tried to remember how wildcattish she had been, in their quarrel, and how utterly in the wrong, he would somehow find himself conjuring up a picture of her, lying face downward across her bed,

upstairs; her dear body shaken with sobs.

She was alone, up there in the dark. She was alone and miserable and probably repentant. After all, he himself had perhaps been just a tiny bit in the wrong. And, as well as he could remember, he had said some pretty raw things to her. Of course she had deserved them. Still—

Gaige got up and started shame-facedly toward the stairs. This brought him into the front hall, and in view of its plate glass door. As he began to mount the stairs, he heard running footsteps climb the stoop.

Harvey glanced back, over his shoulder. Through the glass he could see a man reach for the bell. Then, catching a glimpse of Gaige, the visitor hammered with both fists on the glass panel.

Astonished at such vehemence, Harvey turned back and opened the front door. Into the hallway reeled a man who brought with him an overpowering reek of acrid smoke-smell and the odor of singed hair and of burns.

Harvey stared, goggle-eyed, at the apparition. The newcomer's evening clothes were torn and stained and scorched. Faint smoke still crawled from one or two of the more badly burned gaps of cloth. His face was smeared with soot and discolored with smudged blisters. His mustache and lashes and eyebrows and the front of his hair were all gone. His eyes were red and hideously inflamed. He swayed back and forth and panted like an exhausted runner.

It was not until he spoke that Gaige actually recognized him as the immaculately-groomed Deane Carter. Yet Deane wasted no time before speaking. Ere he had fairly caught his breath, he dragged his dumfounded host into a little reception room, off the front hall; and slammed shut its door behind them. Then he panted:

"Your wife is at Roosevelt Hos-

pital. They're going to take her from there to the Morgue, in an hour. The ambulance surgeon told me. Go there, in a rush. Say that you—"

Harvey Gaige ripped free from the blistered hands which grasped him; and rushed from the room. Upstairs he bounded; his brain in a whirl. Carter had spoken with terrific sincerity. Yet, as Gaige well knew, Yvonne was up in her own bedroom. Because a sudden nameless horror tore at him, he ran up there, to verify his knowledge; before telling Deane there was a blunder in the hoarsely panted tidings.

Up he ran; and, unnoted by him, Deane Carter ran at his heels, trying vainly to check him. Into Yvonne's room the frightened husband dashed. The lights were still burning high. Nothing was deranged. But, in the mirror was stuck a half-sheet of paper. On it, in a handwriting made almost illegible by rage, Yvonne had scribbled:

"I have gone. I am never coming back. I loathe you."

As Gaige's bulging eyes scanned the words, Carter was at his elbow.

"Listen to me!" demanded the visitor. "And try to pull yourself together. You can go to pieces afterward. Plenty of time for that. But now you've got to keep sane. For everybody's sake. For your own; most of all. I met Yvonne this evening. We went together to the Hotel Royal. I—"

A sound, half-groan, half-yell, incredulous and gurgling, burst from Harvey.

"Shut up!" commanded Deane, imperatively. "Afterward you can come back here and kill me, if you like. I'll be waiting for you. I shan't run away. But that can wait. The thing you've got to do, now, can't wait. I went to the Hotel Royal with her. Almost as soon as we got there, the old death-trap caught fire. The stairs were cut off. I started down the fire-escape with Yvonne. I got her as far as the second story—from the

sixth—when a chunk of burning cornice dropped on my head; and knocked me out. We both fell. I landed in the net, worse luck! She—she missed the net. She struck on its edge and bounded off. Her head struck the corner of the curb. The doctor said she died without even knowing she had struck. I heard him order her taken to Roosevelt, on the way to the Morgue. And I ran all the way here."

Harvey Gaige was listening, with writhing face and mouthing lips. In his eyes began to glow the light of murder.

"That can wait!" declared Deane, again, as he read the look. "I'll be here when you come back. But the thing you've got to do now and do in a rush—is to get to Roosevelt Hospital. Go there! Say she is your wife. Say you and she went to the Hotel Royal, tonight, as a sort of spree, after the theater. Say it was you who carried her down the fire-escape; and that the knock on the head dazed you. Say that, as soon as you could collect your wits, you hustled to the hospital to claim her body and bring it home. Say all that; and *swear* to all that. Stick to it. No shame will be attached to her. No shame and no scandal. And no one will whisper and grin as you pass by. It will be tragedy. But it'll be *clean* tragedy. Now go! I'll be here to pay the bill, no matter how late you come home. Hurry!"

As he spoke he shoved the palsied Gaige from the room; and toward the stair-head. Half way down to the lower hall, Harvey drew a long, tremulous breath: as of a man awakening from drug-sleep. Under Deane's propulsion, his brain was clearing.

"I'll do as you say," he mumbled, still dazedly, as he snatched up a hat and coat. "You're right. It's the only thing. But I'm doing it for *her*. Not to keep people from grinning at *me*. No one's going to be able to say my wife was killed while she was at

a dive like the Hotel Royal—with another man. I—I loved her. No matter what she was—I loved her. But—if you aren't here when I come back, I'll find you if I have to search through hell for you."

He was gone; stumbling down the front steps and bellowing hoarsely to a passing taxi.

IV

Two hours later he came home. Deane Carter, still disheveled and in torture from his hundred burns, was standing in the hallway waiting for him.

Harvey looked fixedly at him: for a second: his own face a blank. Then, lifting one feverish hand, he smote Deane across the mouth with his open palm.

Carter's ghastly and smeared face went purple. His wiry body galvanized into ferocious life. Then, on the instant, his muscles relaxed: and he stood supine, letting his arms drop limply to his sides.

Gaige laughed aloud.

"You see!" he jeered, hysterically. "The lover has no standing with the husband. I could go to your clubs and spit in your face in the presence of all your friends. And you'd have to bear it like a whipped cur. As you bear *this*!"

A second time his palm crashed loudly across Carter's mouth. And now, gripping all his own self-control, Deane did not so much as wince nor clench his fists. Mute, moveless, passive, he stood there.

"I've seen you thrash a man twice your size," scoffed Harvey, gabbling with furious triumph, "down at your office: because he hinted you had lied to him about a wheat-pool. And yet, you let me beat you up as I will. A man smaller and weaker and older than yourself. Why? Because I'm the husband; and you're the lover! Is it worth the game.—honestly, you swine, is it worth the game;—when one has to live in mortal fear of a lesser man; just because that man happens to be a husband?"

His face twisting, his thin form vibrant, his tones scaling almost to a falsetto, Gaige snarled up at his victim.

Then, Deane Carter spoke. His voice was muffled.

"I told you'd I'd wait here and that I'd pay my bill," said he. "And I've kept my word. If it pleases you to collect part of that bill by making faces at me and slapping me across the mouth, kindergarten-fashion—well, it's you who have the naming of the price. Not I."

Something in the hard-held control of his foe seemed to have a steadyng effect on Gaige. Stepping back, he spoke more sanely.

"You are not paying your bill, as you call it, in that way," he said. "You are going to pay it in the coin in which all such bills are payable. As my wife, tonight, paid the bill for wronging her husband. It is a pity that such home-smashers as you should have only one whimpering little life to lose. Yvonne paid her debt. You are going to pay yours. But who pays *me* for the wrecking of all the things I held sacred—all the things that made me happy, that made my work worth while? Those are gone. And Yvonne is gone. And when you are gone, too, I am still bankrupt of everything but self-respect. Self-respect is a splendid anchor. But I never heard that an anchor was of any great use, after the ship had gone down."

His voice had dropped to a half-incoherent rumble. He was thinking aloud. Now, with a start, he recovered.

"Come in here!" he ordered, leading the way into his study. "There are things I have a right to know, before—before you are past giving information. Things that don't mean much to me just now. But they'll mean more when I get to pondering and wondering about it all;—later on. And then it'll be too late to ask you. There'll be nobody alive who can tell me."

A strange apathy seemed to have followed his burst of hysteria. The night's crowded tragedy had taken its toll of Gaige's never-strong nerves.

Deane followed him into the study, and shut the door behind them. Harvey went over to the desk, rummaged in a lower drawer; then laid a revolver on the arm of the chair in which he seated himself.

"You see," he explained, sardonically, "I am not as diplomatic as the dentist who keeps the forceps hidden till the very instant he pulls the tooth. I see no need of sparing your feelings."

Deane said nothing; but came and stood in front of the desk at whose chair Gaige was seated. There was another long pause. Harvey fingered the bright pistol. From time to time he glared furtively up at the statue-still man in front of him. Suddenly he spoke; flashing questions at Deane in rapid-fire fashion, as though in the hope of bewildering him into telling the truth.

"How long were you Yvonne's lover?" he demanded. "How long was she untrue to me? How often have you and she had secret meetings? How—?"

"You're not going to believe me," said Carter, hopelessly. "Why should I tell you? You'll only think I'm lying. Let me save my breath for such few minutes as I may still have use for it."

Gaige did not reply. Again the red tide of wrath was creeping into his haggard face. Presently, Carter went on; speaking with dull indifference; as might a man who knows his statements are discounted in advance.

"Still," said he, "if answering questions is part of the bill, I don't mind paying that item, too. You'll be certain I'm lying. And you'll probably amuse yourself by telling me so. Do you want me to answer?"

Gaige sought to say something. He changed his mind, and nodded.

"Very good," assented Deane.

"Until eleven o'clock tonight, I was never alone with your wife."

He paused. As Gaige said nothing, Carter prompted:

"Isn't this the correct place in the dialogue to tell me I lie?"

"Go on," vouchsafed Gaige.

"So much for your question as to how long it had lasted," continued Deane. "Your wife cared nothing for me. I had tried, in a tentative way, to interest her. I couldn't. Yes," he forestalled interruption. "That is the same thing I'd say if I had been her lover. I know that. Only it chances to be true."

Gaige listened, unmoved; except that his nervous fingers kept playing with the pistol-butt and caressing its coldly smooth barrel.

"I came out of the club, tonight, on my way home," resumed Carter, trying not to let his eyes stray from Gaige's face to the pistol. "And I met Mrs. Gaige. She was in a hurry. But she wasn't going anywhere. I spoke to her. I gathered she had had a fearful row with you; and wanted to revenge herself on you. I—I persuaded her the best way to hurt you was to start an affair with me. I persuaded her to go to the Hotel Royal with me. She didn't want to. But I kept playing on your treatment of her, and how it would make you suffer."

He swallowed hard. Gaige's face was a pallid mask. Deane continued:

"I ordered a suite at the Royal. Before we had been in there ten seconds, I saw all my plans had gone for nothing. She cared for you. And she didn't care for me. And she was—she was—*clean*. If I had been a mangy chimpanzee she couldn't have shrunk away from me with any more horror than she did. There was no use. We started to leave. I was going to send her home in a cab. But the fire had started. The corridors were full of it. I told you the rest. That's all. Of course you don't believe a word of it. And I don't blame you."

Gaige had gotten slowly to his feet. His face was still a mask. The pistol was gripped stiffly in his half-out-thrust right hand.

"By the way," said Carter, forcing himself once more to keep his fascinated gaze away from the sinister glint of the weapon, "if ever you marry again, you can save yourself from another such mess, if you'll just remember that being a husband is like any other job: If you're not working hard at it, with all your brain and heart and soul, every minute, you're due to lose out. I don't know what things you said to Yvonne, tonight. But they must have been pretty rotten to get a girl of her sweet temper into such a state of mind. Not that it's any of my business, of course. Bu it may be worth thinking over, when you look back smugly on the memory of how you killed me and of her death; and that the noble husband is the sole survivor. If you'd played the game, and played it fair, this wouldn't have happened. Now, go ahead with the execution. I'm talked out."

This time he faced deliberately the short-barreled revolver; and waited. Harvey lifted the poised weapon an inch or so. Then, with something like a shudder, he tossed it into the empty fireplace.

"There'll be no execution," said he. "No, I wasn't bluffing, either, when I took that gun out of the drawer."

"You—you don't mean you actually believe what I told you—about tonight?" stammered Carter, feeling oddly weak and sick, now that the tension was so strangely removed. "I—"

"Part of it, yes," responded Gaige. "Part of it was a lie. But it was a good lie, I mean the part about her being reluctant to go to the Royal and your tempting her. That was a lie. But it was a white man's lie."

Carter eyed him, agape. Gaige resumed:

"I went to the hospital. The doc-

tor who sent Yvonne there was a novice. It was his first week on ambulance duty. He was rattled by all the horrible forms of death around him there in the street. And, because Yvonne lay so still with her head twisted to one side, he thought her neck was broken. It wasn't. All she had was a touch of concussion of the brain from the short fall from the edge of the net and from hitting her head on the curb. The hair lessened the blow's force. By the time I got to the hospital she had come back to her senses. The doctors say she'll be as well as ever in a day or so."

A gasp of incredulity from Deane Carter broke in on the curtly spoken report.

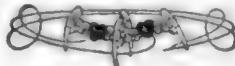
"Then why in blue blazes," cried Deane, "why did you—?"

"I saw her there. Her mind was clear. And she told me the whole

story. It agreed with yours all through—except that part about your tempting her."

"Then why—?"

"I didn't believe a syllable of it," continued Harvey. "I was delirious with hurt and chagrin. I thought she was lying to shield herself and you. I came back here to kill you. Then I let you tell me your version of the story. You and she had had no time—no possible chance—to fix up such a yarn between you; there in that burning hotel. If both of you told it, it had to be true. But the thing that made me *know* it was true, was the way you lied to make me think less hardly of a dead woman. . . . I—I think I'll remember what you said about a husband's 'job,' Carter. And I'll not scamp it again. It isn't on the free list. Now get out of here. I'm going to the hospital to bring my wife—*home!*"



So Blind

By André Saville

*He was full of romance.
He was always looking for the Real Adventure.
He was ever seeking his affinity.
She was full of romance.
She was always looking for the Real Adventure.
She was ever seeking her affinity.
One afternoon they passed on the street.
Neither even saw each other.*



A Drive

By Charles G. Shaw

SCENE: *the interior of a taxi-cab.*
CHARACTERS: *a man and a girl.*
TIME: *a summer night.*

GIRL
Did you tell him West?

MAN
Yes, 103 West.

GIRL
It's awful nice of you to see me home.

MAN
Not at all. I'm delighted to have the opportunity.

GIRL
And I'm sure it's out of your way.

MAN
Why, no, it isn't. Besides, I love driving at this time of night.

GIRL
Yes, it's different, isn't it?

MAN
Everything seems to possess a certain magic—a certain elusiveness.

GIRL
Aren't the electric lights gorgeous?

MAN
Entrancing. They suggest a huge chorus of elves in a fairy forest.

GIRL
I love to hear you talk.

MAN
Oh, I'm afraid I sound silly.

GIRL
You sound wonderful to me.

MAN
I suppose I do get lost in the clouds at times. Forgive me, won't you?

GIRL
Oh, I think it's beautiful.

MAN
It's you who are far more beautiful than any words I could ever utter.

GIRL
Oh!

MAN
A thousand times more beautiful.

GIRL
You're fooling now.

MAN
I mean it—every word.

GIRL
It's awful nice of you.

MAN
I want you.

GIRL
Say, we're almost home.

MAN
Is this the street?

GIRL
Yes. I suppose Mother's been waiting up.

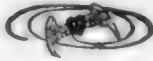
| | |
|---|--|
| MAN | MAN |
| Oh, you live with your mother? | Very soon. |
| GIRL | GIRL |
| Yes. | But you haven't got my phone number. |
| MAN | MAN |
| Oh. | That's so. I'd forgotten. |
| GIRL | GIRL |
| And Brother Ned, too. | I'll write it down. . . . Here. |
| MAN | MAN |
| An older brother? | Thanks. |
| GIRL | GIRL |
| Yes—he's amateur city middle-weight champion. | Don't forget. Real soon. |
| MAN | MAN |
| Oh! | I shan't. |
| GIRL | GIRL |
| This is our house. | Good-bye. |
| MAN | MAN |
| Well, good-bye. | Good-bye. . . . (<i>To himself</i>) Good lord! Middle-weight champion! |
| GIRL | |
| Will you call me up soon? | |



ONCE there was a man who understood women. At forty he still laughed at love and marriage. Then came a woman who understood men. They were married the next day.



A GIRL wins a man by her artlessness. A woman, by her artfulness.



The Messenger

By Charles Saxby

I

IT was the crooning of doves that aroused Lennan from the half-stupor of weariness into which he had sunk with the dawn. That brief hour of coolness had fled and already the sun was sending spurts of liquid heat through the cracks of the bamboo blinds. In the banyan tree across the street the mynah birds were hurrying their morning song; from the broad window ledge came that crooning and pecking which had waked him.

Cautiously Lennan leaned from his bed and put his hand through a corner of the bamboo window-blind. There they were, preening and strutting, waiting the coming of his fingers; purple and grey, greedily unafraid, they crowded about the bit of soaked bread he held out to them. But the pigeon he most sought was not yet there.

Then it came with a whirr of wings, a flash of silver against the deep blue of the Indian sky, dropping like a spent arrow to a confident perch upon his wrist. Pure white save for an edging of black about its wings, and on its breast a single scarlet feather like a gout of fresh blood. Among the drab shapes of its companions it showed as of an arrogant daintiness, pecking in superior confidence at the morsel between Lennan's fingers; and against the red of one leg a little roll of rice paper was attached by a metal clip.

With breathless care he drew it out, waiting impatiently until the unconscious messenger should be done with its reward. Then, as it fluttered from his wrist, he dropped the blind again and

drew back, feverishly unrolling the tiny sheet, bending to decipher the English script cramped to its limits.

"Ah, my lord.
Had I wings as this dove, even so
In the red of dawn would I fly
To feed from the hands of my lord.

Ah, my lord.
Like unto the golden heart of the lotus
flower amidst its white petals
So is the head of my lord upon his pillow.

Ah, my lord.
Even as rain from the lotus-petal upheld,
Runs off, leaving no stain,
So from the upheld heart of my lord
All evil runs off, leaving no stain.
My lord knows not Rohini, but Rohini
knows her lord."

Tired again with even that slight effort, Lennan dropped his yellow head back upon the dubious white of Mem Latchmenia's pillows. Who was she, this unknown, unseen Rohini whose messages came each morning by that white dove with the scarlet splash upon its breast? Where was she? She must be somewhere out under that huddle of roofs of tile or flat plaster, and within plain sight of this window up under the eaves of Latchmenia's tottery old barrack.

Rohini—a Hindu name; but if she were indeed a Hindu she must be already a wife, or perhaps a widow languishing in semi-slavery in the family of her dead husband. The women of India are so secret; even though he were able to walk the streets down there, Lennan knew he could never penetrate behind those secretive walls of splashed pink and yellow. She wrote

English—but then so many of the *purdah* women do that in these days, and he dared not, for her sake, attempt a return message, for he knew not into whose hands it might fall. But she knew him: he thrilled vaguely at the thought. She knew him; perhaps she was even then watching from behind one of those lattices down there, her gaze bent upon his window.

In sudden impulse Lennan pulled the cord of the blind and sent it clattering half way to the ceiling. . . .

A burst of blue heat, and that familiar reek inseparable from all Asiatic towns. A lake of roofs hemmed in by hills of lavender barrenness. Coconut palms swaying in a fitful breeze; the spires of a temple encrusted with monstrous carving which the heat dazzle made move and crawl like masses of unclean life. Beyond it the old palace of the Thakur Rao—ancient despot of the region—an incredible place high upon its rock, which in turn was so honeycombed with chambers that one hardly knew where building ended and rock began. A place of eerie emptiness now, blown through by all the winds and the more desolate from its lingering grandeurs. A vast shell of memory only, haunted by bats, inhabited by apes that chattered from its archways or swung in the wild figs sprouting from its walls.

Then closer he looked to the street below; a river of dusky humanity winding between walls of soiled gaudiness. That house opposite, for instance, its street front a blank expanse of weathered saffron across which a line of frescoed elephants galloped forever in purple and vermillion. Its only entrance was a single door, narrow, solid, studded with great nails. Above it was a balcony veiled, like his own, with bamboo *tatties*; on its rail great pans of growing lotus. . . .

II

How he had come to Cambacoan was not quite clear to Lennan. A wandering American casual, recently dis-

charged from the Mesopotamian front, he had somehow dropped in here unawares to himself. A wrong train perhaps, certainly it must have been a wrong turning which had landed him in this doubtful dwelling. Whether he had been there days or weeks he was not sure, nor did he seem to care in his delirium of fever. He had seen and borne too much in the last three years, and with the lifting of the strain he had felt his mind snap like a broken bone.

"Largely psychic," was Dr. Lal Sa-roop's diagnosis of his case, delivered in Oxford English with a Cambridge manner. A fattish *babu*, in owl goggles and carefully European attire, he would sit by Lennan's bed and lisp tales of Cambacoan. He told the story of that vast ruin on the Rock and of its ravishing, five hundred years before, by wild tribes swooping down from the fastnesses of the Eastern Ghauts. "The Hairy Ones" they were called, these tribesmen, and they had come down in surprise attack as the great palace was given over to the wedding festivities of the then Thakur Rao's daughter, the Lady Rohini. . . .

It was the sight of the white dove preening itself on Lennan's window sill which had prompted that story. There was a superstition concerning those doves. The message of warning which might have saved the Thaku Rao's palace had been borne by a white pigeon, but there had been treachery, and the dove was found next day pierced by a tiny arrow in its breast. The warning was never received, the gates were open and the "Hairy Ones" swept in. The men were slain, the Lady Rohini and her women fled to the secret chambers, kindled the suttee fires always laid, and sealed the doors. Ever since, it was whispered, those white doves had worn that scarlet feather in sign of mourning.

The Lady Rohini—Lennan pondered long on her, seeking to trace some fanciful connection with these messages borne him by the mourning dove. He knew the other superstition concerning that long-gone daughter of a dead king.

How it was told through the streets of Cambacoan that, in the lost chamber in the entrails of the Rock, Rohini and her ladies still slept. Untouched by the flames which they themselves had lit, laden with jewels, in exquisite confusion of limbs and draperies they still lay as they had fallen under the fumes of the fires.

A strange thought—it brought little shivers of excitement to Lennan's spine. He could see them lying the centuries through, immured in the living rock, golden and ivory, the daughters and women of a king, piled one across the other in last embrace.

Rohini—and that dove with its badge of penance for the failure of one of its kind? . . .

But that way madness lay; these Indian airs, reeking of strange and magical things, brought queer notions to one's brain. For sanity he turned his gaze to the realities about him. The street below was beginning to blossom with flags in celebration of the visit of the English governor. Even the house opposite sported a banner evidently home-made above its painted elephants. Lennan knew something of that house also. It was the dwelling of the ladies de Parras, descendants of a French adventurer who had gained the graces of a bygone Thakur Rao and been rewarded with the hand of one of his relatives.

Scanty days had come upon them now, for the Thakur Raos were gone with the coming of the British. Only three old ladies were left, eking out existence by the sale of their jewels. They never seemed to come out of the door between the galloping elephants, only every morning Lennan would see a hand lift the *tatties* on the balcony and pour water on those pans of growing lotus. A strange life—that of these old demoiselles de Parras: he could imagine them, quaint old semi-princesses, moving in their darkened rooms like fading ghosts of the past. He wondered if they too would come out from their seclusion to make obeisance

to the governor? The ruin on the Rock was to revive somewhat of its glory for that occasion; there was to be a pageant of the past enacted, with much local pride, before those governing eyes weary with the present and straining anxiously toward the future. But Lennan was to see nothing of that, for this was the day decreed by Dr. Lal Saroop as the beginning of that long sleep which was to knit together the ends of war-frazzled nerves.

The pellets lay in Lennan's hand, three of them, white and round: odd that things so small should have such effect on a body so much larger. Sleep—it was perhaps what he most desired, to leave the weariness of flesh and bone and drift off in endless spaces of dream. The potency of those swallowed pellets was already upon him; Cambacoan and its intolerable skies, its whispering palms, the blaring conch shells of its temples were fading out in purple twilight. The house opposite persisted longest, its blood-red elephants seemed to be moving endlessly and getting nowhere—that was like life, he thought vaguely—a scarlet feather on a white bird—a sleeping Rohini mourning a slain dove—a nothing. . . .

III

It was dark when Lennan began to drift back from the pits of sleep. A night dew-drenched under a waning moon and filled with vast silence, even the palm fronds had stilled their whispering and Cambacoan lay like a desert about him. That the dove should be there upon the window sill at such an hour hardly struck him as strange; it was all so strange just then that the usual would have seemed stranger still. It was probably just some magic of the moon, but the dove appeared larger and almost as though it shone with an inward light, there was a note of sadness in its crooning, a flutter of appeal as it came to his hand. The familiar roll of rice paper was there, and straining his eyes through the moonlight Lennan bent to decipher it.

"Ah, my lord.
Let the sun of thy presence awake,
For one who sleeps even as sleep the
women on the Rock
Would fain awake with thee."

Quivering with excitement Lennan glanced out over that sea of dark roofs and beyond them to where, upon its heights, the old palace still glowed with light in celebration of the governor's visit. He understood the silence of the town now. All Cambacoan, white or native, had gathered at the Rock to make its obeisance before ruling authority.

Those hours of sleep had been good to his nerves: as he swung his feet to the floor his muscles were steady and a new strength was in his limbs. What he was going to do he could not say, nor could he explain the impulse which was upon him, but as he buttoned himself into a suit of fresh white he knew that he too was going to join the throng up there. A foolish impulse, but undeniable; it came upon him like the grip of something without himself. He had a sense of influences abroad upon the night, subtly potent; the dove was gone now from the window sill, the only sign of its having ever been there was the slip of rice paper upon his pillow.

"One who slept even as those women on the Rock"—all his cool sanity rose up in denial of the fancies crowding in his brain, but something of that moon-magic of India was dripping in through crevices he could not stop. Still in the grip of that compulsion he crept down the stairs and into the street.

A city of the dead it seemed, silent as those frescoed elephants upon the opposite wall in all their mockery of action. The road to the old palace was plain, marked with the litter of a hurrying festal throng; with a shock Lennan realized how deep must have been the sleep which had closed his ears against the pomp of the governor's passing. There was something eerie in the stillness all about him; he himself seemed the only one abroad, even that faint sound behind him was probably but the echo of his own footsteps in the narrow

street, yet he could not help the conviction that some furtive shape was following him.

Past the outer gates of the temple he trudged, where odors of marigold and stale incense lay like impalpable bars across his path. Then suddenly rose up the vista of the Rock, ablaze with lights, fantastic and unreal against the deep blue curtain of the night.

Cambacoan was doing well; a veritable king's gathering this, Lennan saw, as he passed between lines of waiting elephants each with its gilded howdah upon its back, its side cloths of priceless rugs hung with tassels of seed pearls. The grooms and *saises*, intent upon their dice and smoking *chelams*, took no notice as he passed. The gates were wide open, unguarded, and Lennan passed on to the steps winding up the face of the Rock. . . .

He was abreast of the first terrace now and he halted in a fresh maze. He had expected only the usual futile "pageant" enacted by pupils of the mission schools, with the Governor Sahib concealing his boredom amidst a circle of Eurasians and a moth-eaten rajah or two. But this that he saw was magnificently conceived, a veritable revival of the past. The slopes, which from his window had been of a brown and crumbling barrenness, were now green with growing shrubs, great palms, orange trees heavy with bloom, and between them strutted peacocks shrieking disgust at a vigil enforced. He could see the buildings now, tower on tower and turret above, every window aglow, the marble stairs of approach bordered with great lamps of beaten silver shedding soft light and odors of perfumed oil. And between them, up and down, went India in all its pride, great dignitaries in robes of sewn gold, nobles of the Deccan and even of the farther Carnatic, their turbans a crust of jewels. Warriors, rulers and priests, hawk-faced, keen as tempered blades, arrogant in their consciousness of power; slender striplings in white and gold; here and there, on henna-tinted feet, knots of dancing girls scattering smiles

and jasmine blooms. These were the only women to be seen; Lennan wondered at that until he remembered that, in this pageant of the past, the ladies of the palace would be hidden behind those screens of fretted marble.

But where were the English? Probably gathered about the governor in some inner halls, for in all the throng Lennan found his own the sole white face. That it carried authority was plain, for he passed where he chose unchallenged and unnoticed. It was as though these multitudes of actors were so engrossed in their parts that they did not even see him. That gave him a strange feeling; then he smiled to himself as he came upon evidence of that curious Hindu *naircté*, an arch of welcome made from palm fronds, colored paper and fragments of mirrors, shakily lettered across its top "GOD SALVE THE KING." Against the magnificent revival of olden glories the arch stood out with a tawdry cheapness. Yet there was an odd comfort in it too, for without its reassurance of modernity there would have been something almost sinister in the scene, so reminiscent of by-gone days.

He had a glimpse of the hall now, a dazzle of color and light under a myriad lamps. Beyond he saw marble lacework which he knew must screen the women of the palace. Uncaught by the senses, of the mind alone, he felt their presence; a flash as of a thousand eyes, the rustle and tinkle of silk and jeweled anklets, that feeling of a pent and overpowering femininity which might never issue forth. Almost real they seemed now as he recalled those fabled sleepers in the Rock below. There was something suffocating in the thought, this thing was all too perfect. For relief Lennan pressed back against the tawdry realities of that welcoming arch. He was more tired than he had thought; the fumes of Dr. Lal Saroop's drugs still about his brain; the lights were beginning to dance before his eyes and for relief he turned and sought a spot which promised darkness and solitude.

It was a tiny garden, hung high upon a ledge, purple with the dusk of strange trees in the moonlight, cooled by a splashing fountain surrounded by pots of pale iris. As he sank down to bathe his hot forehead Lennan suddenly became aware of a figure seated on the fountain's brim. It was a woman—or rather a girl—sunk as though in dejection there. A chance ray of moonlight through the branches struck full upon her, and revealed a profile of ivory thinness, eyes blackly bright in the shadow of their brows, a gleam of emeralds binding the veil about her hair.

For a long moment they regarded each other, Lennan and the girl, and then she spoke, her voice coming softly across the unseen perfume of the iris blooms between them.

"You have come?"

"How should I not?" Lennan asked simply. . . .

It was all so plain to him now, so expected! Of course, this was where he had been going all the time. This garden of purple dusk with its iris-rimmed fountain bent above by strange trees, this girl rising slowly in a pearly mist of draperies—it seemed the only possible ending to all that had gone before. He saw what she held in her hands now; it was a dead dove, pure white save where there protruded from its breast the hilt of a jeweled pin, such as a woman might wear in her hair, and oozing about it a single drop of blood. There was a throb of tears in the girl's voice as she went on:

"See, my dove is dead!" she cried.

Then came a note of scorn: "It was the Kala Ranee, I have seen that pin in her veil many times—and now it is dead!"

"That dove—it is yours?" Lennan whispered.

"Whose else?"

"It came to me but an hour ago," Lennan went on, drawing nearer. "And many times before that."

"An hour ago?" she murmured in surprise. "But it has been here in my hands for two hours at least. My eyes are red with weeping."

"It came," Lennan persisted.

Across the greenish dusk of the moon-rays they gazed at each other in gathering awe. That dove upon his window sill, glowing as though with inner light—and all the time it had been here, dead in the warm cup of her hands!

"It brought me a message," he said, and the girl's head bent lower over her soft burden. From beneath the silver mesh of her veil her words came in shy reluctance:

"I sent no message—not tonight."

"But you sent them before?" Lennan demanded, controlling the growing strength of excitement in his voice.

With a sigh the girl laid the dove down upon the fountain's brink. She lifted her eyes.

"I sent them, yes. Sent them flying out into the heart of the sky that perchance they might find the hidden heart of my lord. Even as one held in sleep and dreams might send a message to the world beyond that dream sky about her, even so I sent my words forth."

"You sent them to me?" Lennan breathed, drawing insensibly closer still. Then, in cadence like the throbbing bubble of the fountain, he half-chanted:

"Even as rain from the lotus-petal upheld—"

He paused, and with a catch in her voice, the girl took up the words—

"Runs off, leaving no stain, so from the upheld heart of my lord all evil runs off, leaving no stain."

Softly as the perfume of the flowers their voices mingled in the strains of that verse! It was all so incredible, but so wonderful. Dream sky upon dream sky, and the winged and mystic messenger piercing through them, bearing her cry for a heart which knew no evil—a cry for her own awaking! That it should have come to him, that was what was so unbelievable. Lennan felt as though the very core of his being were melting down in the rush of hot humility.

"You sent that message to me?"

From under the fine-drawn line of her brows the girl regarded him levelly.

"Would you be here with me else, in the Chotka Rang, talking in the inner garden with a woman of the blood of the Thakur Rao? Does then Rohini speak alone with aught but her Lord?"

"Rohini!"

That was a cry, tearing itself from Lennan's throat like a thing athrob with life. Swaying toward each other as though drawn by invisible, invincible cords, they came. Purple dusk of the Lesser Garden, bubble and splash of the queens' fountain—it seemed as though it had all been prepared ages before, waiting hidden in a mysterious place to be called forth as the perfect setting for just this inevitable moment. They had always known each other; that they had ever lived apart seemed just a play, a preparation for the added joy of this reunion.

The vast spaces of the night had become a temple, the moon a swinging censer, the arching trees of that garden a chancel in which two hearts sang the undying mass of love. . . .

How long certain ominous waves of sound had been rising outside the garden Lennan never knew; time had ceased in the recesses of the Chotka Rang, but gradually, like a mounting tide about a rock, there broke in upon his rapture a sense of evil.

He distinguished a growling note drowning the lighter sounds of music and laughter, an unmistakable clash of weapons, a redder glare through the trees, a woman's scream, strangled and horrible. With their arms in tight embrace the two peered in sudden fear down the slopes; this seemed no more a pageant, but a terrible reality—the frightened peacocks screeched amid the trees, the silver lamps were quenched and overturned, a blazing pavilion cast a red glare upon the steps where a locked mob swayed and fought in silent fury.

He saw shapes—huge, uncouth, more simian than human, their eyes red with desire and lust of booty. Was that indeed blood staining the marble? And what was that woman's cry from the

chambers above, like a knife of despair stabbing the heart—?

"Women!—follow me—follow me to the flames!"

Now the garden, last spot of peace in that whirling nightmare, was invaded. A menacing shape lurched forward in the moonlight, half nude and hairy, in one hand an iron-studded club, grimly reddened, in the other a bronze casket heaped with gleaming loot torn from the jeweled bodies of the dead. Horribly it loomed, the foul heat of its breath was already upon them, its eyes red lamps of hideous danger. The figure raised the huge club. The impending blow seemed inescapable. Rohini's scream was already in his ear as Lennan, thrusting her aside, caught up a pot of blooming iris and springing to the fountain's brim, dashed it down upon the creature's head.

A slip, a sense of immeasurable depths opening beneath him, a pair of warm arms in impotent support—this was probably death, he thought—this falling endlessly—endlessly falling. . . .

IV

A PAINT grey, growing steadily brighter, was Lennan's first consciousness. Something cool and wet was about his brows: he had a delicious sense of being upheld and soothed. Slowly a world formed before his opened eyes, gathering itself like mist solidifying to reality. That grey must be the dawn, for the shrilling of mynah birds came faintly through it. The towers on the Rock loomed just above him, their windows vacantly tenantless as ever: around him a barren ledge, a scrawny wild fig or two, a trickle of water from the broken lip of what had once been a fountain!

The only evidence of the night's pageantry were those arches of palm fronds, doubly tawdry now under the bleakness of this glamorous hour. Of all the throng who had danced and surged beneath them not even a footprint was left! All a fantasy born of nightmare!

Dully Lennan wondered how he came there and why the acid disillusionments of this dawn should bring such a sense of desolation, such a feeling of loss, as though in their flight those night witcheries had taken with them the most of himself. Against his will a scalding of tears rose to his eyes; still enchanted by weariness, his arms went out in a search for what he knew now had never been. But what was this, soft, warm, living? "Rohini!—"

He was dreaming still, he knew that, for he was imagining an answering pressure, a face warmly vital bent above him, even a voice softly in his ears:

"My lord!"

It was all unreal, he was sure of that, for this was the face of dream—yet how could a dream persist against this caustic of coming day? A girl, even as he had seen her amid the non-existent purples of that vanished garden! The same, except that her dress was cheap and modern and neither veil nor gems bound her hair. Yet her touch was firm, the water she raised to his lips in cupped hands brought a real refreshment with it. He grasped them, coolly wet, pressing them to his fevered cheeks.

"Who are you?" he muttered, "and last night—you were really here?"

"I was really here," came her soft answer.

"But—" He groped confusedly in the memories for some firm resting place for his mind. "Where, then, were the English?"

"There were none here upon the Rock last night save ourselves."

"The Governor Sahib—?" he queried in fresh amazement.

"Came and went two days ago," she answered. . . .

Dr. Lal Saroop's drugs had been more potent than he had thought, Lennan saw. Nearly three days they had chained him in those chambers of rest where even himself was wiped out. Brushing a few more cobwebs of confusion away from his brain, he clung to the girl's hands.

"How did you come here?"

She let the hands lie in his grasp, a faint flush glowed under the ivory of her cheeks, but her eyes held his in unchanged steadiness.

"I knew how long you slept, and last night there seemed no rest for me. Watching from my balcony I saw you rise and come out upon the street, walking as one in a dream, and I—followed."

She had followed, daring the terrors of those night streets, that she might keep a watch upon one who walked unseeingly in a world of strange wraiths. So that was the explanation of those furtive footsteps behind him. Then she went on again:

"It was hard for me to do it, for since I came from the convent school in Madras, three years ago, I have hardly set foot in the streets—"

"You say you watched from your balcony?" Lennan cried in interruption as a suspicion burst upon him. "Who are you?"

"I am Rohini de Parras."

With hands amongst the lotus buds above those frescoed and vermilion elephants; and that dove daily upon his window sill—in enlightenment so vivid as to be almost pain, Lennan drew closer those hands within his until they pressed upon his breast.

"And those messages?"

"I was caught in the sleep of Cambacoan. I saw myself, even as my aunts, withering year by year in that bondage of tradition and, like the dove of our race in its cage upon the balcony, so the wings of my heart bruised themselves against the bars. And then—"

Her head drooped under its dusky coronal of hair, hiding her gaze from his hungry eyes. Her voice became a mere whisper, a thread of silver sound upon the dawn silence all about them.

"And then—I saw you."

Rohini! Rohini of the blood of the Thakur Raos, like an Orient pearl in the purples of the Chotka Rang; Rohini de Parras, real in the growing light—like a jewel conferred, her head rested upon his breast and unconsciously they

stilled their breath in the delicious awe of that moment.

At last Lennan spoke:

"To think that it was only a dream in which I walked, a dream from which I brought you alive and real, while all the rest—the glory and the flames and the blood—"

"But some of the blood was real, too!" she exclaimed, and shivered in the shelter of his arm.

Silently she pointed a hand and following its guidance Lennan saw a shape huddled by the broken remnants of what had once been that fountain. A huge ape, hairy and obscene, its skull crushed as by a blow from a reddened rock which lay beside it. And near by was a corroded thing which might once have been a bronze helmet; as Lennan kicked idly at it the contents spilled out,—chains, loops and pendants, dulled with the dust of centuries but with here and there a gleam of red or green fire that proclaimed them precious gems!

They were looted gathered by some "Hairy One" in that long gone night of the siege, fallen from his dying hand into some crevice where it had lain for centuries through until found by the restless fingers of that wandering gibboon. What the value of those trinkets might be Lennan could not guess, but he saw it must be enormous; scooping them back into the ancient helmet he held it out to Rohini.

"They are yours, the heritage of your blood."

"No, they are yours," she answered gravely, "you fought for them."

"Fought—with an ape?" he laughed harshly.

"It was angry and powerful. It would have torn us had you not slain it with that stone. . . ."

The Rock was being gilded now by the first rays of the sun, above the sky turned to sudden blue, and from Cambacoan, spread out below, came the first hum of awakening. Dropping the jewels into his pockets Lennan held out his hands to the girl.

"Not mine, but ours, for from now we go together—always together."

Slowly she came toward him, with a step of grave joy, lightly, as one in the release from iron bonds changed to the golden chain of love.

"You knew not Rohini, but Rohini knew—her lord."

The great stairway of the night was

broken and lampless, arched only by those withering palm fronds; its throng of beauty and strength long dust and mere memory. But to them it was a path of light down which they went, hand in hand, to the opal fires of the day.



Fairy Pool

By Elizabeth Shaw Montgomery

I LONG to live by a fairy pool
In the midst of a forest green,
The rose and the bee would make for me
A dress of silken sheen,
And I would sleep on emerald moss
The earth and the sky between.

I would bathe at dawn in its crystal depths
And a bird would dry my hair,
I would drive at noon on a dragonfly
With never a single care,
And with the falling of the dusk
I would meet my lover there.



THOSE who always speak well of women do not know them enough; those who always speak ill of them do not know them at all.



MARRIAGE begins like two canary birds chirping in a cage. It ends like a fight between two battleships.



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*Can drugs control the will to Love?
—Society and its darlings of the
stage are threatened by a sinister
power.*

Synthetic Love

A Craig Kennedy Story

By Arthur B. Reeve

"KENNEDY, you must have observed this psychic crime wave—to me the most sinister undercurrent in the world that thinks it thinks. Between Freud and Volstead, the plea 'Not guilty' nowadays goes for nearly everything that used to be a felony."

The whimsical smile of Ogden Kent, famous young attorney in charge of the government's prosecutions against the profiteers, covered something more serious, as he watched little four-year-old Marjorie Kent sitting on my desk daintily playing with the keys of the portable typewriter.

"My wife—my former wife I suppose you'd call her—you know, Daphne Marvin, elder of the two Marvin sisters, Daphne and Diana?—well, I believe she is a victim of a group of—psychic gangsters!"

Being a yellow journalist, I knew the story of Daphne Marvin and Ogden Kent (at least I thought I did), of her ambition for a stage career, and of the estrangement over Gertner of the National Opera.

"They are a gang," reiterated Kent pugnaciously, "a gang of love wreckers, at the National Roof. Something ought to be done to expose and curb them, too. Young society is upturned by them, running wild. Old society is undermined, scandalized."

I knew that the Roof at the National Opera had obtained wide notoriety for its production of spectacles as staged by Gabriel Gertner and the famous ballet master, Michel Focher.

"Within a few months a half dozen divorces, two remarriages, as many suits for alienation of affections are directly traceable to them. It has set a new low-water mark in society, this enterprise which started so brilliantly."

Marjorie by this time had exhausted the mystery of the typewriter and stood gravely before Kennedy's laboratory table. Over a Bunsen burner merrily bubbled the water in a flask into which Kennedy had been about to introduce a sample of the stomach contents in a suspected poisoning case, just as the big Kent town-car pulled up before the laboratory. I knew that in the child's mind something occult was working.

"But what have they—any of them—done?" emphasized Kennedy.

"Why—just this. There's a new scandal brewing. You know Dr. Trask?"

"The psychoanalyst?" nodded Craig. "Slightly."

"Well, Donald Trask was a childhood lover of Diana. You hadn't heard of his failing health?"

"N-no. What seems to be the matter?"

"That's what I'd like to know. Is it

another of those Freud theory psychoses? . . . Or is there something sinister about it? Are Diana and Donald victims of psychoanalysis of themselves—or by others? Are they psychic prey . . . or is there . . .?"

"Professor Kennedy," interrupted the pretty treble of Marjorie watching the shaking shoulders of the flask, "can you shimmy, too?"

Kennedy smiled, but Kent paused and scowled.

"You see, the decree hasn't yet been made final. As for Marjorie, by agreement this is my day. I've just been to get her and—well, I've been thinking about her a great deal. Kennedy, I don't want her to grow up in that life. Besides, I can't help feeling that if she is to inherit the Kent name and the Kent fortune—I have the right to give her at least some of what I think the Kent name and fortune should carry with it."

Kennedy had always refused divorce cases. But this began to seem different.

"Some friends, the Barclay de Forests," urged Kent, "are trying to bring about a reconciliation between Daphne and myself. I want the advice of someone who is disinterested—someone I can trust. You see, a few days ago Daphne was displayed in the rôle of solo dancer by Diana. She feels sore over being given a minor part—but I think it is a step in the right direction—for Daphne. Now, along comes this estrangement of Diana and Donald. It all looks queer to me. Won't you look into it? You would be doing my former wife and me a service, I assure you—perhaps this other young couple—in reality, Kennedy, a public service. . . ."

THUS it was that Kennedy and I attended a special forenoon final dress rehearsal of the great spectacle, Lhassa.

Ostensibly we did so in the interest of the *Star*, with my friend, Alec Adair, the dramatic critic as our sponsor.

The rehearsal of the vivid and gorgeous Lhassa was a social occasion for some chosen few of the inner circle. Gertner, with the polished fascination

of his professional culture, and Focher with his sophisticated *embonpoint* shone before an audience as brilliant as the spectacle. For the National Roof was backed by a syndicate headed by Carl Langley, head of the Anglo-Saxon Trading Company, and all society was there—at least all of a certain smart set.

Our success was even greater than I had anticipated. Here was one place at least where the press connection opened the door. Adair was on intimate terms with almost everybody.

During the intermission, we found ourselves introduced to the very girl we wanted most to meet and gradually Kennedy led the conversation, avoiding the sore spot of her displacement but skirting the subject on which we were most interested.

"Dancing is the safety valve, don't you think—the means of working off suppressed desires," asked Daphne Kent, adding, "the outlet of suppressed emotions?"

"Or," flashed back Kennedy, "is the dance craze merely the loosening of passions?"

His remark brought a slow, thoughtful response. "Well . . . you see, I went into it because I believed it to be the outlet of emotion . . . and now I find that these people . . . well, often . . . they are using it as a means to capture society and capitalize its vices."

Why had she said it? Was there back of it a fixed idea? Under seeming condemnation of Gabriel Gertner and his National Opera for pandering to the fast set was there a subconscious fascination for Gertner?

Daphne Marvin Kent was not a mere show girl. Back of that remark were the seeds of tragedy—perhaps of one personal tragedy—doubtless of others to follow.

We returned to the rehearsal again and after the intermission the second part of the spectacle was even more gorgeous than the first.

It was the Dance of the Gods in the New York's festivities before the great Jokhang in the Sacred City—a saturnalia in which the new little sensational

solo dancer broke forth more dazzling than all the rest of the dazzling cast.

To some, it was a spectacle of innumerable lanterns shedding lights on colored figures in bas-relief, framed in arabesques of animals, birds and flowers—figures on an heroic scale representing the history of Buddha—a spectacle of the dance in such a setting as had never before been attempted on the Roof.

To the little solo dancer I now realized that it was more than to anyone else. Back of it showed through her inordinate desire to dance, raised now to the sublimity of art, of that perfection of all art that comes from spontaneity alone.

Flashed over me the thought: What was it to someone else in that theatre—the culmination of what deep-laid plan?

The curtain fell upon a spellbound, rapturous audience and for a full minute there was a hush, then, as the curtain rose again on the whole cast surrounding the lithe dancer there came a deafening wave of applause.

From the wings suddenly swarmed a dozen attendants as the audience pressed forward upon the stage. It had been a part of the plan of the management to give this intoxicating soupçon to the members of the syndicate whose money had made this production possible. To keep up the enthusiasm of the promoters it had been arranged that the audience was to have tea on the stage with the cast.

We found ourselves irresistibly watching the little solo dancer as Gertner and Focher crowded around and Langley joined them.

"That is my little sister, Diana Marvin," remarked Mrs. Kent, who had rejoined us. "Now Di is being drawn into the life."

"I thought," remarked Kennedy, "at least it was rumored, wasn't it?—that she was engaged to Dr. Donald Trask?"

Daphne shrugged with a bitter smile. "Diana and Donald are estranged. . . . It's more than a lovers' quarrel. And either Mr. Gertner or Mr. Langley is with her all the time. I'm frantic about it. I did not approve of the intimacy

of Mr. Gertner—and I can hardly say I approve any more of Mr. Langley's friendship. You know, he represents the syndicate that is backing the show—the angel."

Her tone was such that she might just as well have added in words, "the fallen angel, I think."

"Donald was so much better fitted for her—really understands Di. They were brought up together. He loves her—deeply—oh, why can't she see it?"

A moment later she was over with them. What did it mean? All she said was an argument equally applicable to herself and Kent. Was Daphne one of those women consciously frigid, unconsciously passionate? And after all was she really the love-slave of Gertner?

From Adair we learned that some years before, Langley had purchased the old Trask estate.

"He calls it Langley Lodge. In it he established himself with Martha MacLean as housekeeper; she's now Diana's maid. The gossip is that she is an old flame of Langley's—snuffed out. Another member of his entourage is his Japanese assistant in his business, Izumo Tito—over there in that group."

Langley, Adair told us, had always been interested in the drama and a frequent visitor had been his friend, Gertner, and also Focher. Both of them were romantically inclined. It was Gertner who had won Daphne Kent from her husband. At the same time Focher had developed a fascination for Diana. What interested Craig most was when Adair recounted how, by a shifting of this kaleidoscope of passion, when Gertner and Focher were at odds over Diana, Langley had come into the field and seemed virtually carrying off the prize.

"I've persuaded Mr. Gertner to have some tea with us," fluttered Daphne a moment later.

"Persuaded?" he bowed. "That's not the word. I don't need any reins or blinders to gallop here, with you."

"Whose idea was this?" asked Adair, looking about.

Gertner said nothing but his smile answered.

"The most wonderful promoter in the profession," complimented Adair. "You are a showman."

Daphne had gone ahead with the pouring, like many others, not waiting for the attendants. I set it down to her eagerness to hold Gertner.

As she handed the cup to him she curtsied whimsically. Daphne's hands were beautiful. So was the hollow of the back of her white shoulders as she bowed her head forward toward the producer. I wondered at Gertner's thoughts of the two. They were both beautiful girls. If I knew him aright by reputation it was: "Damned beautiful fillies—I'll have to try them both out!"

Although with us, Daphne gave a glance now and then—was it of apprehension?—at the other group of Focher, Langley and Diana. Her attention seemed to be vibrating like a pendulum from the group about her to the other about her sister.

Gertner made an apology and was, like a good promoter, circulating from one knot of people to another.

I saw Focher detach himself from the other group. Daphne flitted away and for the moment Craig and I were alone.

I was about to say something when Craig checked me.

Langley had come up to Diana, alone, just apart from the rest, behind the fronds of a clump of artificial palms, on the other side of us.

Langley poured a cup of tea for her, his back for the moment toward her, then swung around quickly.

"Diana—after tonight you will be famous!"

"Oh, Carl—not with my own talent. Don't I know how you have helped—with Gabriel and Michel? And you know how I appreciate it! It was so kind of you to take such an interest in this little untried flapper!"

"My dear—here's my hand. When you are famous don't forget our friendship."

"Carl!—how could I?"

"Look up at me—Di—no, the hand will stay, dear. Why the flushes. Don't pull away—it's so wonderful to be close to you. . . . Your breath is like a breeze on a fire—it sets glowing all the man in me. . . . Do you want me to let you go?"

"No—I want you to hold me . . . hard! I—I—my mood is answering yours. Why am I this way? I feel when you have me close as if it were the realization of the desires of ages. . . ."

"I wish this were really a jungle! I'd lay your head on my shoulder, fling my arms about you—show you the joy of loving. Di . . . I could hold you this way . . . forever . . . only there is a more wonderful joy in store for us . . . as we realize love. . . . You must come to a little dinner which I am giving Saturday . . . at the Lodge . . . you must come . . . I'll not take 'No'!"

There was silence. Was it the silence of a long, lingering kiss, shaded by the palms?

"You will, Di? . . . Yes . . . you will! . . . When I see a thing I want . . . I take it!"

I felt a gradual shift of interest from the troubles of Kent and Daphne to the throbbing case of Diana.

Craig and I moved quietly from the palms and ran into Focher and Adair, as Daphne was coming toward us.

Kennedy complimented Focher highly on his little pupil who had just given such a wonderful exhibition.

"*Mais, oui*—she is mar-rvelous!"

"But I think I—" smiled Daphne, coming up behind him.

"Ah—but you—madame—for the great Greek spectacle—ah—the gorgeous! That will be reserved for your talent—something far more difficult than this Lhassa!"

Was it camouflage—to cover something ulterior?

A moment later Focher and Daphne contrived to shift a couple of paces apart from us. I heard Langley's name mentioned. Could it be that she was delving into Langley's past and Focher was telling her of some discovery.

Had Daphne made an ally of Focher to combat both Gertner and Langley to save her little sister? Had she used Focher to alienate Diana from Gertner—and now was she trying to repeat it to alienate her from Langley?

Or was Focher playing a game against all three to capture Diana for himself? In other words, who had really displaced Diana as the solo dancer—had it been Gertner, or Focher, or Langley? . . .

In the wake of Adair we sought the social flotsam and jetsam, then, noticing that Langley had left Diana, Kennedy unobtrusively began to edge over nearer her.

Daphne had not ceased her roving about with jealous eye for the welfare of Diana, and the sisters encountered each other just as we were coming nearer, separated by a flap of scenery.

"Di, you ought to be more careful."

"Careful? About what?"

"About—about Langley. You know—a man with a past—"

"Oh, listen, Daph—you forget Gabriel—"

Daphne winced. "Just think a minute—your position—the Marvin name—this is social suicide!"

"That's old stuff, Daph! It makes me think of arguments you and Ogden used to have. Remember how you used to say: 'I feel the urge of self expression!' Well—this is Di speaking now—not Daph—light-hearted, care-free, dancing Di. . . .

"It has come at last! Di has overcome Diana. I have found my profession—Dianne the dancer! And Di's destiny is more to her than Daphne, Donald, and all the other D's of your damned society!"

"My urge had become a surge. I may be dead to you all—if you do go back to Ogden—but I'll enjoy the rarest freedom. At least there'll be no good hypocrites on my visiting list!"

The wordy battle of the sisters took itself to another part of the stage and Kennedy turned into the wings. We found ourselves in the greenroom and

near the corridor to the dressing rooms.

A middle-aged woman was coming out of the door which bore a big star on it. We needed no introduction to know that this was Martha MacLean. I could not but think of Martha as a sort of duenna to Diana. Could that be a step in Langley's control? Were Gertner and Focher principals? Or were they merely pawns? Or was it a triangular struggle for the two famous beauties? . . .

The office of Focher was directly in front of us. Kennedy stepped in a moment.

Shoved under some disturbed papers as though hastily hidden, I caught sight of a small bottle. Curiously I pulled it out. In it were some brown capsules; but on the label was printed "SACCHARINE."

Kennedy took the bottle, opened it, and abstracted two or three of the capsules, then shoved it back under the papers.

Some moments later, down the corridor, Diana came almost skipping in exuberance to her dressing room.

Through the crack of the door as we passed we could hear the trilling voice of Diana. Martha had returned.

"Daphne worries a great deal about me. But you know, the truth is . . . a woman is never really happy unless she is in love!"

Kennedy paused just past the door.

"Love?" trilled on Diana. "Do you know what love is?"

I could not help feeling the selfishness of youth, as she went on, not waiting for an answer.

"Love is two souls mating for the fulfilment of Nature's greatest joy—wise old Nature! I'm eager for love. . . . Every nerve is a-tingle, every limb . . . every organ . . . ripe for the fullest expression of Nature. . . . But I want a man just as full of life as I am. I want a man who can give me the thrills of Cleopatra! I want a man, when I mockingly withhold my consent, who will seize me and force me to surrender! I want to feel arms that will break my restraint. I want to feel lips

hotter than my own! I want to feel . . . mastered! . . . For that I would lose the world. Carl's love leaps to mine. He is a darer—a doer—and I—I am a wild Diana. I blow and a stolen kiss—they mean more to me than Donald Trask's polite, 'Kiss me good-night, Diana!'

I could not hear Martha's comment. But I felt she was a strange confidante. At that moment she closed the door.

II

Out on the street again, in the yellow sunlight of mid-afternoon, I felt a queer sense of the unreality of life. Which was real—the gorgeous spectacle in the theatre with its fetid love—or the hurrying throngs on upper Broadway with their well-masked, torpid passions?

Kennedy knew Trask slightly and I knew that it was to Trask that his next step was taking him.

Out of the tail of my eye I watched Craig. He seemed now to go at the case like a hound in his eagerness. What was it that was spurring him ahead—a psychic scent? The more I watched his manner, the more a half fear formed in my mind. It had no solid basis beyond the fact that it was merely a horrible suspicion—perhaps born of my own fear.

Donald Trask, though still young, had already built up quite a reputation as a psychoanalyst. We found him, tall, spare, rather handsome. But he seemed to be lacking something in alertness. I thought his eyes heavy, a bit vacant; which was not natural for one with eyes such as his.

As we discussed the National Opera, I noted that it was always with bitterness that Trask heard the mention of it, especially once or twice when Kennedy casually mentioned Langley's name. Was this in the manner of a psychoanalytical fishing expedition for Craig.

"It was last fall," he rambled on, "when I came back from the continent—where I went mainly to pursue my studies—to help Diana. . . . And now—she cares nothing—apparently."

Then he launched forth in what I thought at first was a non-sequitur, but later came to see its bearing.

"She doesn't know that this desire to dance is in itself Nature's safeguard, that it is this intuitive inhibition that accounts for much in her life. I've been telling Kent all this and making him understand it. It's the means of working off the suppressed desires and making room in her complex nature for the 'good' elements in her character. I had hoped Kent could make Daphne understand. Diana—Diana could have learned it—through me—if she only would let me. . . ."

We listened for perhaps half an hour to Trask's morbid psychoanalysis of Diana and the dance. Who, I wondered, would psychoanalyze the psychoanalyst?

Now and then Kennedy threw in a veiled remark touching on the physical condition of Trask, which was indeed evident in both his morbid manner and actual appearance. Each time in response to Kennedy's concealment under the mask of solicitude that he was working too hard, Trask turned it aside.

Mostly his answers regarding himself were listless. But finally to the point-blank inquiry whether there was anything physically wrong, Trask answered rather testily, "What of it?"

Kennedy managed to restore Trask's good humor and there followed some scientific fencing over "despondency" and "hypochondria." I could see that there was some suspicion working in Craig's mind.

Ultimately he persuaded Trask to submit to a perfunctory examination of his heart and lungs. Once I saw Craig glance sharply at the back of his neck. But apparently he found nothing. Finally he persuaded Trask to give him a couple of blood smears. . . .

It was by this time late in the afternoon. Kennedy went direct to the laboratory, while I stopped around at our apartment, for we were to go to the opening that night.

By the time that I rejoined Kennedy

in the laboratory, I was astounded at the look on his face, the intensification of the look that I had noticed before our visit to Trask.

"What do I find?" he answered to my query. "Trask's psychosis is really developed from a true neurosis."

"And the cause?"

"Pneumogastrin—at least that is what I have named the substance I've identified."

"Pneumogastrin?"

"That's not its real name—it has no name—but it affects the pneumogastric nerve. At least that's how I account for the cooling of his ardor—and also killing him, as I believe, by its action on the sympathetic system."

My face could not have denoted very clear comprehension, so he went on, "I used that name for it because it appears to have an affinity for the tenth cranial nerve, the vagus, or wandering nerve, most extensively distributed of the cranial nerves, with branches to the lungs, heart, stomach, and so on. I suspected it from the depression, the melancholia, the apparent actual destruction of libido. But there was no mark on his neck of the cutting of the nerve, near the carotid. No . . . it's a drug . . . a synthetic drug."

My heart sank. "What—who—?" I stammered.

"Who? Only one person—Artifex!"

Artifex! My most horrible fear was realized. Again we were faced by this sinister shadow.

"Who is he—which is he?"

"I analyzed one of those capsules you found in Focher's," avoided Kennedy. "Focher had a scientific love philtre!"

For the moment I was too astounded to speak.

"It was full of a grayish brown powder."

"Cantharides?" I hastened.

Kennedy shook his head. "No, that bug is an exploded superstition. I don't know what I would name this thing—something, perhaps based on glands, which effects glands and nerves—call it just an aphrodisiac, synthetic love! It's a drug that would make Veronoff and

Steinach jump off the roof of the National Opera for envy."

"The modern chemist goes beyond even what the old alchemists aspired to, the elixir of life and the philosopher's stone," I exclaimed.

"This Artifex does," shot out Craig. "The fountain of youth is nothing to him with his modern alchemy of the mind! He plays upon the most wonderful facts of life—heredity and character—which find their final explanation in the chemical composition of the components of life-producing germinal protoplasm! Pathological sexual hyperesthesia!"

At once I thought of Diana's passionate nature, possibly heightened and intensified, of the cave-man actions and phrases of Langley. Was there any connection with this synthetic aphrodisiac, accentuating the urge of sex?

And Daphne, was there a more logical explanation for her actions? Had something gone wrong in the effect of the synthetic love potion—if indeed it had been used? And was something more than a mere antidote for it needed?

My mind spun like a wheel racing. Artifex, the fantastic crime master, with his drugs of passion and drugs of destruction of libido, was working toward the discredit of our society—working in a spot rotten and decadent of itself!

Quickly I ran over our slender knowledge of Gertner, of Focher, of Langley.

While my brain was spinning, Kennedy's did not stop. Briskly he picked up a small ounce bottle.

"Come—put on your hat. Before you came in, I developed what should prove to be an antidote to this pneumogastrin. I can't waste any time giving it to Trask. Besides, I want him at the opening performance tonight; sick or well."

Trask was peevishly astounded at our quick return visit. But it was only for a moment. No sooner had Kennedy launched into his discovery than Trask's eyes bulged as though he had had a sudden attack of exophthalmic goitre.

Never shall I forget the relief that

passed over his face as Kennedy slowly and deliberately drew from his pocket the ounce bottle in which he had placed his hastily synthesized antidote.

Back in our apartment, we had barely time to dress for the premiere of the great Lhassa. Abstractedly Kennedy unburdened himself as he fumbled with his studs, swore at his collar and tie.

"Every vice, Walter," he snapped out, "is now hedged in by sumptuary laws—with the result that humanity reacts against restraints—and welcomes the old vices in new forms more intoxicating than ever."

"At the same time," he went on, "with this attempted restraint comes the new freedom of women, with a breaking down of social and sexual standards. Here we have the ingredients that Artifex is playing upon—a covert attack, as I believe, upon society itself!"

I was doing my best to hurry him, but he was full of the subject. "I can't enter into what started this wave of sex mystery cases which I am finding constitute the new criminality, but the fact that they are in the news must be evident to you, Walter—whether it is in your newspapers, the magazines, the novels, the plays, the pictures, the songs, the dances, the clothes—or the lack of them!"

To bring home his point, Kennedy was digressing into his philosophy of modern life, and I let him, chiefly because I had no control over him, but also because I figured that we ought to be late, anyhow.

"Multiplying laws, we have multiplied crimes . . . and every time one of these fool laws is broken it weakens respect for really fundamental laws. Take prohibition. It attempts to save the weak and, as Herbert Spencer I think it was, said, the unfit to survive . . . and already I see it producing a new type, the most dangerous type of criminal from a social standpoint with whom we have had to contend . . . an efficient criminal . . . but one who—when every harmless outlet for his energies has been removed . . . finds left only that instinct with which Nature has

endowed men and women! It's making a strange age of libertinism and puritanism; of moral crooks and sumptuary hypocrites!

"Now, the moment I came into this case, I knew it would prove one of the most fascinating, to me, of this new series of sex mysteries. For new customs create new crimes. We may expect more of such cases. Artifex knows it . . . knows that in the present topsy-turvy world of sex relations a new outlet for criminal impulses is being developed . . . knows it, and he has set to work to intensify it!"

III

At Lhassa we were slated to occupy seats with Ogden Kent at a box party given by Mr. and Mrs. Barclay de Forest. The Barclay de Forests had arranged a little meeting after the show at their apartment which was to bring Daphne and Kent together—perhaps.

Mrs. de Forest confided to me that to the best of her observation the time was ripe. She had noticed, she said, a hearty disgust in Daphne with all the stage and its trappings. I did not venture to gainsay it. But I did wonder whether what we had seen in the forenoon had been a revival of the old Daphne through jealousy.

We were just the other side of being politely late, but in our case there was an excuse, for de Forest had been forced to wait outside for Mrs. de Forest, who insisted on paying a visit to Daphne in her dressing-room. However, Mrs. de Forest appeared at last and we made our way to the box, de Forest taking Kent, while Mrs. de Forest contrived to lag behind.

She had a purpose. In an undertone I caught a hasty aside to Kennedy and it conveyed startling information. Even Craig had to grip himself not to betray it.

"Do you suppose . . . Daphne could have contracted any of those habits . . . I hear are so prevalent nowadays . . . in these piping days of prohibition? On her dressing-table . . . I saw a little

box . . . of queer little brown capsules. . . ."

I glanced at Craig. Fortunately Mrs. de Forest had suggested the alibi and he was vehemently scouting the idea of Daphne being a drug fiend.

But I got it. Daphne had obtained some of the scientific love philtre herself!

Where did she get it? From Focher? As Mrs. de Forest, having unburdened her discovery, now rattled on, I began to wonder: For what purpose? Something in her remarks must have put the same idea into Kennedy's head. If Daphne were really keen on reconciliation. . . .

Craig contrived even as we were seating ourselves to have a few seconds aside with Kent. By the expression on his face I knew that he was tactfully putting him on guard.

Amidst the rustle of silks and sparkle of eyes, the flutter and glitter, grace and animation, the very audience at Lhassa was a show in itself.

As for Lhassa, that is a part of dramatic history—Lhassa, quivering, sonorous, passionate, seductive. It is enough to say that the premiere was a triumph, a triumph for all the dazzling cast, for Gertner, for Focher—and above all for Diana—the sensational, new-found Dianne.

We went around after the performance to the greenroom. There, surfeited with the glamor of her dancing, all the gorgeous cast crowded about Diana—not because she was Diana Marvin, pet of society in which she moved by her birthright, but sheerly for the sincerity and spontaneity of her art such as had never before enthralled a dance-crazed audience even in the history of the wonderful offerings of Gertner and Focher.

I watched Diana for a moment. With her stood Focher and at some distance Langley. I could not help feeling that, after all, Langley was a handsome specimen of manhood, a powerful man, with every faculty and function in pagan accord with the spirit of the performance.

I felt also that Carl exhibited the keenest enjoyment in the reception of the little dancer. But, more, he betrayed an assurance that seemed nothing short of pride of possession of the real self, as it were, of the lithe, graceful Diana.

Surrounded by her friends of the company, among whom was Tito, who had been a valuable adviser, I learned, on much of the truly Oriental atmosphere of the spectacle, Diana could not conceal the thrill of exaltation at the commendation of the great Focher. It was the moment for which she had lived.

Apart from the crowd, as if waiting a favorable chance, I caught sight of Trask. He seemed marvelously improved, whether it was physically from the antidote or mentally, between Kennedy and the excitement.

Gertner passed. I thought he looked worried, played out.

Transported as though to the fourth dimension, Diana caught the dominating eyes of Langley as the brilliant motley of youth and beauty instinctively made way for him.

Ardently Langley spoke of the glory of her success. Yet there was a smile on the handsome face as he bent over her that was an enigma. It was as though he had been certain of this moment. Diana seemed to be swept into a state of trance, for the moment, by the warm greeting of Carl. His touch awakened in her a response that no hand of all those in the greenroom had inspired. She was whirled into a vortex of passion.

It was not until some minutes later when, alone, she had turned toward her dressing-room, that she saw Trask.

"Even my wildest dreams, Diana, have never pictured such a triumph as this!" he said.

For the flash of an instant Diana could not conceal the conflict within herself inspired by these two men. It was as though two natures within herself responded to them, as though Diana must put forth a superhuman effort as one nature turned from its response to

Carl and refused to let her go, while the other nature within her soul leaped to respond to the renewed attentions of Donald.

"Can't you love me," he asked, in a tense low tone, "—just a little—Diana?"

The babble of the crowd caught her ears.

"Don—I like you. Sometimes I think it is more—but you are so—so reliable. I almost know what you will say before you say it, what you will do before you do it. . . .

"And, dear old Don, any man to keep my heart palpitating must keep my mind guessing, too. My love is a restless, vibrant love. Yours is a settled, matter-of-fact love. I'd die of ennui after the third night of the honeymoon. I would even know how you would arrange your clothes for the rest of your life. Horrors! Marriage would make little difference in *your* manner of living. . . .

"Why, I could jazz for sheer joy to imagine your face if I should hand-spring like a filmy cloud from my boudoir into your arms. . . . It would shock all the Eros out of you! . . . I want a man who will burst in on me like . . . like a sheik!"

"Diana—how can I win you? My love and respect for you keep me from using your own weapons. Think, dear, how it was when we used to be together. You and I are mud-pie sweethearts, darling. Are all those loving, playful hours forgotten, Diana? Don't they mean anything to you? Oh, Diana, how can you forget so soon? If I could only put you in my coat—and carry you off to love—to safety. . . . Now you are laughing at me. I can't stand it—it is too much for any man!"

She had really been smiling vaguely at Langley, who was approaching as though he scented danger.

Beside the slender girl the two men's eyes met in an encounter that portended a struggle of opposing forces that root back to the ages before Adam.

Langley as he spoke to her laid his hand on the arm of Diana. He spoke with a studied ease of irrelevant things,

but his action was as though to show to her and to the world and above all to Donald Trask the invisible lines of force, stronger than any magnet, that drew the nature of Diana irresistibly to himself like a human armature.

With equally studied absent-mindedness Donald made some reply to Carl and turned to Diana. As he did so, he took her hand, in such manner as to insure the sliding off of Carl's hand from her arm. Yet it was the antithesis of the greeting, a few moments before, of Langley.

How far the conflict of the two men or of the two natures within the slight girl would have gone it is difficult to say. Langley, sidewise, caught sight of Martha, who was standing with a wrap. At an almost imperceptible motion of his head she came forward and threw the wrap over the exquisite shoulders of the little dancer, whispering something of the draughts.

"Yes—Martha—I shall be with you—directly."

A second later Diana released her hand from the grasp of Donald, flashed a glance at Langley, then flew to her dressing-room, leaving the men with lips that belied the rapier glances of the thinly veneered twentieth century.

As she passed toward her dressing-room Diana murmured to Martha, "If he *had* put me inside his coat with a bang—and a kiss—I might want to stay there! . . ."

SUDDENLY there was an outcry.
"Gertner has collapsed!"

We crowded forward in the confusion with the rest. "He's poisoned!" whispered one fearlessly. "Is he dying?" queried another. For Kennedy one glance was enough, as Gertner opened his eyes after the brief collapse. The expression on his face, in his eyes, was only too similar to that we had seen in Trask.

Daphne, wild-eyed, encountered us in the corridor, just as Diana's door opened to the cries of alarm that penetrated.

"Wh-what's the matter?"

Kennedy shook his head gravely, then spoke deliberately. "Everywhere—I find strange new drugs—one to curb the passions—another—in little brown capsules—to create them—really a scientific love philtre."

Diana did not seem to take it in. But Daphne almost fainted.

Kennedy with a meaning glance drew Daphne down the corridor away from the rest.

Tearfully she whispered. "At the tea—this forenoon—I don't know what made me do it—I was wild with jealousy—when I poured—I put something—in Gabriel's tea—the thing I was going to use—to win back Ogden!"

With a shock I saw the tragedy of it. I saw her as a jealous woman, a woman scorned, a woman who could not allow any other woman, even her sister, to outshine her and keep men from worshipping at her feet, a woman who craved admiration.

The immediate point was that this thing, unlike the capsule Kennedy had analyzed, had been poisoned. It had not acted until near midnight. But there was pneumogastrin in it. Kennedy lost not a second in administering the last of the antidote which Trask had, to Gertner.

All thought now of the after-theatre reconciliation had been knocked from Daphne's mind.

As for Craig his sole idea was uncovering a new clue to Artifex. Daphne admitted obtaining the capsules from Focher. But who had poisoned them? Focher by this time had had a chance to recover his balance. Neither through Daphne, nor later with a direct threat could Kennedy get a word out of Focher. Focher had shut up like a sphinx.

IV

THE premiere had been on Thursday night and the regular run was to begin the following Monday.

Over the week-end Langley went out to Langley Lodge and Gertner, much improved the following day, decided to

S.S.—June—5

week-end at the Lodge also, to recuperate. Focher also decided to join them.

In Kennedy's judgment it was the best policy to let events take their course, especially as the week-end was also to see Diana back at Marvin Manor, adjoining the Lodge. With Diana, of course, went Martha. For the time it seemed all ideas of reconciliation were in abeyance with Daphne, and Kennedy seemed rather glad to learn that she, too, had decided to return to the Manor. He seemed to be evolving a plan for the interplay of these conflicting elements.

It was perhaps an hour after midnight on Friday when we were awakened by an insistent chauffeur at our buzzer at the apartment.

There was Trask, his face cut and clotted with blood, half in a daze still, supported by the chauffeur and another man.

It seemed that, with Diana back at Marvin Manor, in such close proximity to Langley's lodge, Trask had worried all Friday, until he could stand it no longer. Thither, too, he had journeyed, oblivious to all but Diana.

He had found her restless and morbid. He had pled with her. But Diana had resented even the suggestion of any change in her career or her manner of "self expression."

Wilfully she insisted on her way, as she had before the death of her father, about her night prowling over the countryside. She had wanted again to wander over the meadows and the forests of the estate.

Trask had been in a quandary. It was not that he opposed it. It was solely fear for her safety—knowing the nearness of Langley. He had followed her on her ramble—and he was right. Langley and Tito, walking in the twilight, passed, Langley eyeing him cynically, confidently.

As Trask saw Diana disappear after a final pettish fling, he became conscious that another was watching from the shadows. It was Martha.

He had said just a trifling kind word to her before he started in pursuit of

Diana. Others had scorned her and thrust her down as a ruined woman. This man seemed human.

Trask started after the slitting shadow, unmindful of Langley not many yards away in the darkness.

Suddenly Trask had been confronted by him. Not a word was spoken. Each knew that it was a physical crisis.

It had been a terrific battle of man to man, for Trask was no weakling, barring only the effect of the pneumogastrin. Indeed Trask seemed endowed with power even greater than in any ordinary ordeal—the strength he had once felt in a championship game behind the line when they had gone in, beaten on the score board, to win by the slashing attack of Trask, fullback.

Momentarily the battle was swinging in his favor, and then Langley, with the eternal desperate desire to win at any cost and in any manner, fumbled with a blackjack in his pocket. Cut and bleeding, Trask lay as though dead. Langley sprang up and darted after Diana. . . .

In the moonlight the startled face of Martha peered through the parted shrubbery. Reassured that Langley was gone, she glided across and bent down over Trask. He was not dead. As she wiped his face and tried to bind up an ugly gash, he muttered Craig's name—"Professor Kennedy!"—then his voice must have trailed off.

It had been at least an hour before Martha could obtain a car and place Trask in it, less than half conscious. It was with great relief that she saw him driven off to us, herself in great conflict, now.

Trask lay almost a wreck, bandaged and tossing deliriously, but toward morning he grew calmer and more lucid and during the following day in our apartment he was much improved in strength.

IT was nearly evening when Kent dropped in, in his sport car, having just learned of Trask's shindy with Langley.

The telephone rang and Kennedy answered. The call seemed to be from Martha, evidently a regenerated Mar-

tha. As nearly as I could make out Langley had persuaded Diana to attend a dinner at the Lodge that night, a dinner at which Gertner, Focher and a couple of the other Lotharios of the opera clique had been invited, together with Diana, Daphne and three of the best dancers in the company.

None of us were obtuse.

"I can well imagine that occasion," fumed Trask, thinking impotently of his former own house, "half a dozen of that fast set in the gunroom—with cocktails—the big banquet hall—for the revellers—the foyer with the beautiful medieval staircase brought from the old Castle of Cawthorne—and—and Langley lord of the orgy!"

"What's he inveigled Diana into?" analyzed Kent. "Do you suppose Daphne's gone to protect her little sister? She'll need someone to protect her. By God—I've got the car—I'm on my way!"

Martha's appeal to Kennedy seemed to give Trask new power. Kennedy expostulated, but Trask smiled grimly through his bandages. Ten minutes later Kennedy, Trask and myself piled into the sport car with Kent and swung off.

Kent's frenzy fed on Trask's as his car reeled off the Westchester miles, crossed Putnam county, and then into Dutchess.

Faster and more furious, evidently, had progressed the bacchanal dinner. At the moment we entered the banquet hall, all had paused in an instant of expectancy, and stood clinking glasses.

Trask, who of course knew the house like a book, led the way. We paused and followed the direction of their eyes.

To the top of the stairs strode Langley, then started slowly down, one step at a time, around the sweep of the curve.

It was a beautiful scene—at least it might have been but for what it meant to the actors in it. For Langley held in his arms Diana, wrapped in some diaphanous filmy thing, the drapery flying. Evidently she had promised some wild dance.

Langley was now half way down the stairs, as the diners called. Martha, in fascinated curiosity, was peering around the head of the staircase, her hand behind her in a fold of her dress.

Langley, around the curve, advanced down another step.

"STOP!"

I turned. It was Trask. In his outstretched hand was levelled a gun.

A hush of silence, then consternation fell over the bacchanals.

Above all came a strident order from Langley. It seemed to gather the scattered wits of the wastrels. With a mutter of anger, all began to gravitate toward Trask, eyes riveted on the gun pointed at Langley.

There was a blinding flash—all over the hall.

It might almost have been tricked—for it seemed to me to be a double flash, with only a split second between the parts of it—a flash from the gun of Trask—and another back of Langley and Diana.

With a gasp Langley pitched forward, flinging out his arms as Diana fell the half flight of stairs—and lay still—both of them—at the very feet of Trask and the startled revelers.

INSTANTLY Focher, Gertner and another pinioned Trask with the still smoking revolver. Tito and the servants had fled in terror. Only Craig seemed to keen his head.

With the girls he bent over in quick attention to Diana then turned to Langley. Kennedy rose. Langley was dead.

In the hysterical terror of the little dancers there was a shock of soberness to the five men. Murmurings of Gertner, Focher and the others grew. On Trask's face was merely a smile of grim satisfaction. He pushed them aside in scorn and dropped on his knees beside Diana who had by this time been lifted to a divan.

I turned suddenly to see Kennedy backing Focher into a corner.

"Yes—yes, sir," cowered Focher. "I'll tell. Mr. Langley—was a specialist in imported scientific love potions—he

created a cave man out of himself—sought love slaves—through the drugs—sought Dianne. What? Yes, sir, Dr. Trask stood in his way!"

I wondered whether Kennedy would spare Daphne and keep silent of the love philtre and Gertner. There was no need. Not three feet from me, Daphne, in terror, wide-eyed, had flung herself upon Kent.

"There—there. Probably I owe my life to your jealousy. Think, Daphne, if you had really given it to me—who don't need it to love you! I see it now—why, it was poisoned—for me! In my safe are the papers in the government's case against the profiteering of the Anglo-Saxon Trading Company—"

Kennedy was marching Focher before him into the library. At last we would clear up all about Artifex.

As we entered the library, I saw that there was unmistakable evidence that it had been visited hurriedly and ransacked.

"He has been here!" I exclaimed breathlessly.

Without a word Kennedy started to examine the room. It was empty.

Artifex had won the heat. We had lost him again. Someone had been getting too close to Artifex—and he had allowed the lips of Langley to be sealed.

In the hall, a couple of the diners, a bit worse for the liquor, were urging forward a motorcycle officer whom someone had called.

Finally he laid his hand heavily on Trask's shoulder as he smoothed Diana's brow.

"You are under arrest for murder!" "No—no—no!" cried Diana, shocked into consciousness, opening her eyes wide.

Suddenly, Kennedy, striding from the library, took command. He gestured. Pale, gaunt, staring, Martha glided across from the staircase. Her waist was torn and her arm was bandaged with the strips of it.

"Two shots were fired!" exclaimed Kennedy.

Startled, all paused.

"One was Dr. Trask's—" Kennedy eyed her searchingly.
 "—the other—yours!" Martha's bowed head acquiesced.
 Everyone crowded a bit closer.
 "One bullet struck Carl Langley!" In an ecstasy, despite the pain,

Martha stripped the bandage from her arm:

"The other—his—Dr. Trask's—is—in my arm!"

With a sigh of relief Diana clung closer, then sank limp in the arms of Trask.



Stein and His Sin

By Basil Thompson

STEADILY, I looked at my sin,
 Unflinchingly.
 Sin, I said, you're a blackguardly lot,
 You've played the devil with me.

My sin smiled in his curious way
 And rolled an irreverent eye.
 Stein, he said, you're a farcical dunce,
 And I'll show you why.

Go look at yourself in the looking-glass
 In the corner where you shave,
 And tell me then, by the beard of your god,
 Whether you mean to behave.

I went to the mirror and looked at myself
 Unflinchingly.
 Sin, I swore, by the whiskers of Stein!
 There's no hope for me.



Ambitions

ALITTLE girl gazed upon the photograph of a great actress, and sighed, "If I were only she!" The great actress gazed out of her window on some children at play. "I would give everything I possess," she said, "to be a little girl."



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Pretty Polly

By Gene Markey

Flappers are as out of date as earmuffs. But this little heiress didn't know that—and her ignorance served her in good stead.

POOR POLLY! Of course, she shouldn't have done it. Everybody who knew about the affair will tell you that; and since it happened no longer ago than this last holiday time, nearly everybody remembers the consternation Polly wrought. Opinion, at the time, was divided. There were those who frowned darkly upon her actions; those there were, too, who said they did not blame her. But to understand the affair completely (which is to have a glimpse at all the families concerned) and the intricate pattern of circumstances leading up to it, on with the chronicle!

To begin with, the social position of the Wigginses in Chicago was as pre-eminently eminent as that of any royal family in Europe. They were outrageously wealthy; so wealthy, indeed, that they were able to keep an antiquated 1913 limousine without fear of comment (which, in Chicago, is something). And so massive was their Gothic gray stone house on Lake Shore Drive that the addition of a spire would have made it resemble a cathedral.

Old Alexander Wiggins was a large, pompous man with a ruddy face and a suspiciously brownish beard. Every morning he was to be found at a certain LaSalle Street bank, of which he was

president; every afternoon, in a window of the Sarcophagus Club, where a row of stuffy millionaires sat frowning down upon the Avenue and sourly contemplating the bare stretch of park opposite. A man (was Mr. Wiggins) who could entertain himself for an entire evening playing Harry Lauder records on the Victrola.

Mrs. Wiggins wore dowdy hats and had a face like a turtle. Usually she was to be seen carrying a copy of *The National Geographic Magazine*. There was nothing of the *grande dame* about her: rather, she had the appearance of a prim settlement worker. Yet in truth she needed neither beauty nor Paris gowns. She was Mrs. Wiggins: the Mrs. Wiggins of Chicago. Scarcely a woman's club in town but boasted her name on its board of directors; then, too, she was president of the League for the Protection of the Morals of the Young.

Of this admirable Wiggins dynasty there was but one heir—heiress, rather: Miss Polly Wiggins, who was as beautiful as her parents were not. When Polly was sixteen there had arisen a great clamor about the indiscretions of the younger generation. The word "flapper" came to be on every tongue—and in most of the magazines. Flap-

pers and sleek-haired youths, it appeared, were cutting wide circles and fancy figures on the edge of the social ice, while everyone else looked on—amused or shocked. Mr. and Mrs. Wiggins had been (quite naturally) shocked, and in high alarm had packed Polly off to a dismal convent in Switzerland. The sentence imposed was three years, and so fearful were these righteous people lest their daughter be contaminated by the rising tide of flapperism that they even forbade her returning to her native land for vacations. (In reality, there had *been* but one vacation, and that a rather left-handed one: a sojourn, sharply chaperoned, among the art galleries of Italy.)

Thus dwelt pretty Polly Wiggins, demurely unaware of the pyrotechnics that girls of her age were setting off over in New Rochelle, Chicago and other parts of what someone once facetiously termed the Land of the Free.

But with the approach of her nineteenth birthday, Polly's exile came to an end, and the senior Wigginses, assured that the giddy gallop of the younger generation had slowed down to a walk, and that flappers had gone out of fashion, ordered her home.

So it came to pass that Polly (nineteen, now, and enormously pretty, with her peach-bloom complexion and whimsical gray eyes and taffy-colored hair), tingling with expectations of the coming holidays at home, and of her debut on New Year's afternoon, landed in New York just before Christmas.

Curious, indeed, are the pranks that old Mrs. Destiny plays. More curious, still, when her son, the queer little god Coincidence, assists her in the game. On this particular day Madame Destiny must surely have had her tongue in her cheek, and young Coincidence his fingers crossed; and as they sat together, pulling the strings, doubtless they chuckled slyly . . . or perhaps rocked back and forth in silent, mocking laughter. For on the day that Polly reached New York aboard a French liner there arrived upon an English ship a rosy-cheeked young

gentleman whose card bore the inscription:

Captain the
HONOURABLE CEDRIC BROOME STONYB
The Guards Club

And at another pier not far removed there disembarked from a South American boat young Sylvester Twombly, referred to in the Sunday supplements as Chicago's wealthiest youth, accompanied by his mother, his tutor and a retinue of servants.

II

AGATHA TWOMBLY was a nervous woman. She said so herself. In fact she said so more frequently than anyone else. It was her wont to date happenings, not according to the years upon the calendar, but in relation to the one event in her life of which she was most proud . . . her nervous breakdown. Thus she would never say, "Such-and-such a thing happened in 1912," but "I remember very well, my dear, it was the year before my breakdown!" And as a means of keeping the members of her household in complete subjugation, she was forever threatening to have another.

Sylvester Twombly had been brought up in the little Lord Fauntleroy manner, his childhood shadowed by valets and velvet suits. He had never been allowed to play with other boys, nor to venture forth on cloudy days without his rubbers; nor, indeed, to venture forth on any sort of day without a governess. Forsooth, never was a princeling of royal blood more delicately reared.

Now, after some years of continental travel, the towering red-stone Twombly residence on Lake Shore Drive was to be opened, and great preparations were under way. For on New Year's Day Sylvester would be twenty-one: which meant that Grandfather Twombly's fortune, long held in trust, would pass into his hands. And for this event, which was of no small consequence, Agatha, Sylvester, old Blenkinsopp, his tutor, and fifteen servants were coming home.

III

THE Wigginses, being an eminently proper family, were governed by a strict social code that had not been altered since the Chicago fire. With them a début was an impressive event—a ceremony ranking in dignity somewhere between a coronation and a Turkish wedding. In *their* family no girl was permitted to be seen "out" until her début: it was her duty to remain at home preparing, with all the solemnity of a novice taking the veil, to make her bow. All of which was emphatically impressed on Polly from the moment she arrived home, and bored her no little. For Polly, though demure, as we have intimated, had what is known as a mind of her own.

In that bustling week before Christmas, when holly wreaths bloomed in shop windows, and the limousines of Lake Shore Drive sped about filled with packages, there burst with brilliance upon the social horizon of Chicago Captain the Honourable Cedric Broomestonby (pronounced Brumby). Now, Chicago is a curious place. Let any sort of personable foreigner, who can find his way about a drawing-room and knows the proper fork to use—let him arrive, say, on a Monday, equipped with letters of introduction to the dwellers along Lake Shore Drive, and by Tuesday he will be besieged with invitations. An Englishman particularly. For an Englishman, fashionable Chicago will stand on its head or turn handsprings. And the more arrogant his manner, the more obsequiously it salaams. Captain Broomestonby, however, was no mere visiting Englishman. He was the youngest son of the Earl of Billingsbridge, and himself possessor of one of the finest collections of black pearls in all England.

In their spacious green-room off the stage of the world old Mrs. Destiny and the little god Coincidence had, of course, arranged that Captain Broomestonby should be a collector of black pearls. It would not have done at all for him to have the acquisitive passion for, let us say, scarabs, or ashtrays of the Ming

dynasty; he must be a collector of black pearls. Because old Alexander Wiggins was reputed to possess the finest collection of black pearls in America. . . .

Christmas Day passed rather stupidly for Polly. There was the usual austere exchange of presents, the usual stuffy dinner and the usual reading aloud of the "Christmas Carol" in Mr. Wiggins' gruff voice. A dreary old day it was, and many times during the afternoon Polly yawned. Then, toward five, Captain the Honourable Cedric Broomestonby arrived.

The senior Wigginses had met him two days before at somebody's dinner, and because he was the son of an earl, and because Mr. Wiggins had heard about his collection of black pearls, they received him with all the acclaim due a visiting potentate. The Captain was very dapper, pink of complexion, bright of eye, with a trim little mustache, and in his faultless afternoon attire seemed just to have stepped over from Berkeley Square. At sight of him, Polly, who had been long in a convent, promptly lost her heart. Or at least mislaid it.

Mrs. Wiggins, who kept at all times a weather eye out for fortune-hunters, presented her daughter warily, and watched for suspicious signs of interest on the part of the noble visitor. But Captain Broomestonby seemed in no way impressed with the pretty heiress.

"Capt'n Brumby," said Mr. Wiggins when they were all seated in the gold and old rose drawing-room before a crackling log in the Florentine fireplace, "I haven't noticed the newspapers mentioning your visit."

"Quite so," replied the Captain in broad, somewhat nasal Londonese, "I don't fancy publicity, y'know. As a matt'r of fact, I requested your papers to make no mention of my being in Chicago."

"And this," queried Mrs. Wiggins, "is your first visit to America?" It was her customary opening with foreigners.

"Quite," nodded the Captain, "I'm just looking about, y'know."

"Many of your countrymen," pursued

the lady with small subtlety, "have come over here looking for wives."

"Quite so," chuckled the Captain, "but as a matter of fact I don't fancy gels—much."

"Indeed?" smiled Mrs. Wiggins much relieved.

In her corner of the big divan Polly sighed.

"The Capt'n," gruffed Mr. Wiggins, "is int'rested in something else. Pearls of great price, one might say."

"Quite so," grinned Captain Broomestonby. "And now that I'm here, I hope I shan't be deprived of seeing your collection."

"Ah," beamed Wiggins, rubbing his hands together, "nothing I enjoy more than showing my collection to someone who can appreciate it." He stood up, "I keep them upstairs in a wall-safe. Shall I bring them down—or will you come up?"

The Captain rose.

"Oh," he said patronizingly, "I don't mind going up." And with a bow to the ladies, followed his host from the room.

"Um-m!" exclaimed Polly, looking after him wistfully, "what an attractive chap he is!"

"My dear," said Mrs. Wiggins, "you've been in a convent. Don't get excited over the first man that comes along."

"I'm not excited, mother dear. He didn't pay any attention to me."

"Never mind. The boy I want you to meet will be at your coming-out party. He's been abroad for several years."

"Oh!" . . . Polly had never cared for her mother's selections.

"Sylvester Twombly—"

"Oh, that boy! I remember him a long time ago. He used to wear Buster Brown suits and read Plato."

"The day you come out," reproved Mrs. Wiggins, "Sylvester will be twenty-one—and all the Twombly money goes to him."

"That may be," sighed Polly, "but I wish Captain Brumby wouldn't stay upstairs so long—looking at father's silly pearls!"

IV

ON New Year's Eve, the night before Polly's débüt, Mr. and Mrs. Wiggins were sitting over their coffee at dinner, when they were interrupted by the entrance of Bowker, the fat butler. Of all the English butlers along the Drive, he was the only one who had ever set foot in England.

"Beg pardon, madame," said Bowker, "telegram."

"For me?" (She always said "For me?" when anyone brought a telegram.)

"Bad news?" asked Mr. Wiggins, watching her read it.

"Why—yes!" She put the yellow sheet down hastily. "It's from Boston. Uncle Cyril is desperately ill."

"Hm!"

"We must go to him at once."

Mr. Wiggins fingered his beard. Uncle Cyril was very rich and was going to leave all his money to them. Of course they must go. . . .

"But—Polly's coming-out party?"

"It is too late," said Mrs. Wiggins, with a show of nervousness, "to postpone that. Tomorrow—and all the arrangements made."

"But we certainly should be on hand for our own daughter's— You forget Uncle Cyril?"

"Yes, yes." He plucked at his beard. "Uncle Cyril. . . . But someone in the family must present Polly—"

"I know," announced his wife, "Caroline can do it!"

"Hm. Of course," nodded Mr. Wiggins, "just the thing. Caroline can take full charge—and you and I will catch the night train for Boston."

THUS it came about that the Wigginses, *merc et pere*, departed that evening for the East, and Polly was left alone. On the morrow Aunt Caroline, who was a spinster of considerable social prominence, would come over to "take full charge" of the affair, and arrange the thousand-and-one details attendant upon the presentation of a bud to what is called Society. . . .

Meanwhile there was, for Polly, a dull evening to be passed.

As she sat curled up on the chaise longue before the glowing fire in her room, a petulant frown had gathered on her brow, and something akin to revolt stirred beneath the frilly lace and ribbons at her breast. She was beginning to feel that life was not treating her as kindly as it treated other girls. In America one sensed a certain air of freedom—but she had never been allowed a good breath of it. Existence here at home offered quite as many restrictions as the convent. It was, of course, a relief to know that her parents were en route to Boston. . . . Aunt Caroline was sort of a haughty, impossible old creature, but then. . . .

Almost before she was aware, visions of the dapper Captain Broomestonby came swaggering across her mind, and the frown deepened. It was a matter of some chagrin to her that he had evinced no signs of interest. Probably, she reflected, he considered her—as did her family—merely a child. If only she might make him see that she was *not* a child! Tomorrow he was coming to her début. . . .

Restlessly she rose from the chaise longue, and walking to the window, stood for a moment gazing wistfully up at the cold winter stars. It was New Year's Eve, and probably every other girl in Chicago was dancing some place. Revolt simmered anew in her heart. She wasn't sleepy, and it was only ten o'clock. Still, she could not go out. Perhaps a book to read. . . .

Wandering through to her mother's boudoir, she switched on the lights and crossed to the old spinet escriatoire in the corner, where stood a shelf of books—*forbidden books, erotica, et al.*, that in her capacity as president of the League for the Protection of the Morals of the Young, Mrs. Wiggins felt compelled to read. Polly had noticed this shelf a few days after her arrival home, but had not, ere this, found opportunity to visit it. Tonight she needed a book that was "different," and as she stood glancing along the row,

two titles caught her eye: "This Side of Paradise" and "Flappers and Philosophers"—both by a Mr. Fitzgerald. Now Polly, having missed all the explosive reactions and wide publicity of the Great Flapper Movement, had never heard of these green-covered volumes, but obeying a whim, she took them from the shelf and carried them off to her room. Arranging herself comfortably among the pillows of the chaise longue she opened "Flappers and Philosophers." . . .

An hour later she sat up, wide-eyed, and looked around the room. The book was an amazing revelation. Flappers, it appeared, were girls who bobbed their hair and did all manner of outrageous things: smoked cigarettes, downed swigs of gin, and told people quite generally to go to hell. They operated (these flappers) on the shrewd plan of startling everybody; but the charming part of it was—everybody fell in love with them. . . .

Polly sighed. Then suddenly her eyes brightened, and she snapped her fingers, as people do in plays when they say, "*I have it!*" Only Polly did not say, "*I have it!*" She was thinking of Captain the Honourable Cedric Broomestonby, who had thus far paid small attention to her—for the obvious reason that she had in no way attracted him. She was too demure, that was the trouble. As the flappers in the book would put it, too *damn* demure! Very well, then! This Mr. Fitzgerald's book had put a coruscating idea in her head. She, Polly Wiggins, demure and conventish, would make Captain Broomestonby notice her. She would, flapper fashion, startle him.

Jumping off the chaise longue, she pattered, in her fluffy pink negligee and mules, out into the hall and down the broad caronal staircase. Below there was no one about. In the great dining-room a dim light illuminated the gleaming mahogany table, the stiff-backed chairs and the grim portraits of former Wigginses on the walls. To the tall, carved sideboard Polly went, and dropped to her knees and opened all the lit-

tle doors. Flappers, she had learned, tossed off gin with impunity. She must know how. *Hélas!* There was no sign in the Wiggins sideboard. But there were cigarettes. Rising, with a box of them clutched to her breast, Polly scurried up the stairs.

In her room she closed and locked the door. She would show Captain Brommestonby! The procedure would, of course, require practice; but the night was young, and so was she, and there was nobody around to bother her. Striking an attitude before her mirror she put a cigarette between her lips and, with an elaborate gesture, lighted it. . . .

At nine the next morning her maid knocked discreetly on the door.

"Yes?" came a brisk voice from within.

"Your breakfast, Miss Polly."

"Haven't time for breakfast." The door was flung open, and there stood Polly, completely dressed, pinning on her hat.

"But, Miss—"

"It's all right, Jennie—don't let it worry you. But I've got to shake along."

"Shake—along?"

"Downtown—to the hairdresser's. It's a holiday, but I called up and got a special appointment."

The faithful Jennie, mouth agape, sensed a curious metamorphosis in the person of her pretty mistress.

"Hairdresser's?" she faltered. "I—I thought I was to do your hair, Miss Polly?"

"You couldn't," explained the near-débutante, hastily pulling on her taupe caracul coat, "I'm going to have it bobbed!"

And a young lady who was no longer the demure Polly Wiggins fled swiftly down the stairs. . . .

AT half-past three that afternoon Sylvester Twombly's long, lean figure was settled in a red leather armchair in a corner of the library, his spectacled face bent over "The Nicomachean Ethics of Aristotle." Came a perfun-

tory cough at his elbow. After a moment he looked up.

"Well, John?"

Wentworth, his valet, bowed.

"Your mother, sir—"

"What does she want *this* time?" There was shrill annoyance in the young man's voice.

"She says it is time to dress for Miss Wiggins' party, sir."

"Who? What party? When?"

"Miss Polly Wiggins' début this afternoon."

"But I don't want to go to any—"

His valet was the only person in the world who knew what a regular fellow Sylvester was. No one else had ever given him a chance.

"Sorry, sir. Your mother said to get ready."

"But look here, John, I'm twenty-one years old today, and—"

"I know, sir. I'm sorry. But your mother can't go, and she promised Mrs. Wiggins she'd send you."

"Oh, all right, then—*darn* it!" With this fearful oath Sylvester closed the book and slammed it on the table.

"I'll lay out your new cutaway, sir, and the Prince of Wales black polka-dot bow—"

"*Anything*," grumbled Sylvester, "I don't give a—" (he was perilously close to saying "damn")—"a hang!" he finished recklessly.

Wentworth smiled, bowed and withdrew.

Fine way to spend a birthday—going to some silly début! Girl he'd never seen. What was the good of being twenty-one, anyway? With a frown he rose from his comfortable armchair. Four stuffy old trustees had taken the entire morning going through the ceremony of turning over to him Grandfather Twombly's estate. He had hoped to have the afternoon to himself. Besides the Aristotle there was "Kant's Transcendental Deduction of the Categories" that he wished to dip into. And now he must wobble off to this stupid party. . . .

Sylvester, at twenty-one, was shy and awkward and knew no more about the

world than a cherub. The Little Lord Fauntleroy manner of his rearing had allowed him scant opportunity to see "life." Indeed, it was the private opinion of his valet that if Sylvester ever "got loose once" he would marry the first chorus girl that came along and chucked him under the chin.

V

"BOWKER!"

"Yes, Madame?"

Aunt Caroline was a large, round-faced woman, possessed of a silvery wig and the figure of a retired opera singer.

"Isn't Miss Polly dressed yet?" Her hoarse contralto invariably struck terror to the hearts of servants and social climbers, but Bowker, who had been at one time in the service of the captious duchess, quailed not.

"No, Madame," he replied, "Miss Polly is still in her room."

"Well, tell her to hurry," commanded Aunt Caroline, "people will be arriving any minute now."

Some moments later there came a patter of footsteps on the stairs, and an amazing vision floated into the gold and old rose drawing-room. Polly—in a Paris gown of lemon-colored crepe de Chine—her lovely blonde hair bobbed and standing out frizzily.

Aunt Caroline's eyebrows rose (it might be said) to the occasion.

"My God, child!" she gasped, "what have you *done*?"

"Nothing," replied Polly sweetly, and kissed the startled lady on the cheek.

"But—but—"

"There, now—don't have apoplexy!" Coolly she adjusted her corsage of Cecil Bruner roses.

"Polly! Your *hair!* What—what will people say?"

"Listen," advised the overnight flapper jauntily, "ring the bell on that emotional act, will you, dear!"

"*Ow!*" shrilled the plump Aunt Caroline, shaken to the soul, "you—you—"

But the further enactment of a scene was interrupted by the appearance of

Bowker between the rose velvet portières, announcing the first guests. Aunt Caroline blinked, shook herself, and hastily put on the false smile of the receiving line. With a graceful yawn the débutante assumed *her* attitude. . . .

WHEN, later in the afternoon, Captain the Honourable Cedric Broome-stonby arrived, the fashionable world of Chicago was filing past Aunt Caroline's robust person, and murmuring pleasant inanities to the débutante. There was a funereal fragrance of flowers upon the air, and a gay chattering of voices. The rooms were crowded with modishly-gowned ladies and stupid-looking men, and somewhere a muted orchestra was playing Werner Janssen's "Love Dreams." Nodding with arrogant friendliness to several people he knew, the Captain shot his cuffs and stepped into the long queue. Just in front of him he observed a tall young gentleman who, but for his goggly spectacles, would have been rather handsome, and as they slowly approached the receiving line the Wiggins butler leaned forward.

"Wot name, sir?"

"Mr. Twomby," mumbled the tall, spectacled young gentleman.

"Mr. Twom-bly!" announced the butler.

"Oh, how d'y^e do, Sylvester!" Aunt Caroline effervesing. "It's been *ages* since . . . how you've grown. . . . Polly . . . yes. . . ."

And as the Captain patiently waited his turn, he saw that Sylvester was gazing with shy admiration into Polly Wiggins' eyes, reluctant to move on. Then:

"Captain Brum-by," announced the butler.

FOR the first time in her life Polly was experiencing the delightful sensation of being admired by men. A magic exhilaration! And rather fortunate, since the Wiggins punch contained no exhilaration at all.

Seven o'clock. The *haut monde*, having done its bit, had departed, the

orchestra was putting away its instruments; and in the doorway Aunt Caroline stood talking to last departing guests.

"Twas satisfying, indeed, for Polly to realize that of all the men who had passed in review before her this afternoon, she had been able to pluck the very two she wanted. Here they were, one on either side of her: Captain Broomestonby and the Twombly boy (to whom she had taken a whimsical fancy)—both apparently reluctant to leave. She had pursued the proper plan—to startle them. And because neither the Englishman nor the Twombly boy had ever before seen an American flapper, their captivation was complete.

By the doorway Aunt Caroline, in sprightly tones and gestures, was conversing with young Mrs. FitzHugh FitzHerbert, who was chic and sharp-nosed and always went in for the newest things. (Hers had been the first set of plucked eyebrows west of New York.)

"My dear," this lady was saying, "somebody ought to tell her. She—"

"I tried to tell her," said Aunt Caroline, "but—"

"It's too absurd! Becoming a flapper when flappers are *all* out of date! And—"

"And having her hair bobbed! Why, it hasn't been the style for years! Wait till her mother—"

"I don't see what the child's thinking of. . . ."

Across the room Sylvester Twombly and the Honourable Cedric were politely trying to outstay each other.

"I say," offered the Captain, by way of conversation, "when d'you expect the pater back?"

"Oh, dear," sighed Polly, "I don't know. But let's not talk about *him*. Whenever he's around you run right upstairs to look at his old collection of pearls."

The Captain laughed cacklingly.

"I," said Polly, "would like to raise a little hell tonight!"

Sylvester gasped, and Cedric fell to coughing.

"This house is like a tomb. I want action! Give me a cigarette, somebody!"

Sylvester stared open-mouthed, while Cedric fumbled with his cigarette case.

Blowing the first whiff into Sylvester's face, she shook her fluffy bobbed hair and snapped her fingers.

"Look at her!" wailed Aunt Caroline, from the doorway. "Just look at her! It's outrageous!"

"Flapper tricks," sniffed young Mrs. FitzHugh FitzHerbert, "out of date long ago!"

But to the Englishman and the Twombly boy these flapper tricks were evidently a startling innovation. Both were regarding Polly as if the next minute they expected to see her turn a cartwheel on the rug.

"Let's go somewhere," she suggested airily, "just as we are, I mean—without dressing again. We can slide down to the Blackstone for dinner, then later, Kate Pringle's giving a dance at the Pavilion. You two be my guests!"

"But," began Captain Broomestonby, "your family—"

"Pooh!" The débutante dismissed this objection with a puff of smoke and another shake of the blonde bobbed hair. "I'm out now. Come on!"

Catching an arm of each she romped across the drawing-room, the young gentlemen following with embarrassed reluctance.

"Where are you going, Polly?" Aunt Caroline in the doorway.

"Out," replied Polly blithely.

"But—you can't! You must—"

"Oh, go to the devil!" cried Polly, and pushing her startled suitors before her, achieved a triumphant, if somewhat unconventional, exit.

VI

ESCONCED in the luxurious upholstery of a town car that bore, blazoned upon its doors, the Twombly arms, Polly, with Sylvester and Captain Broomestonby on either side of her, chattered gaily. They had dined sumptuously at the Blackstone, and the little

illuminated clock before them showed the hour to be ten. Polly was exuberant. Having walked off with two men who interested her (indeed, she was not sure which one interested her most), the evening glowed with adventure. She was out for a "whirl," was Polly: she would lead this pair a merry chase. . . .

The Captain's thoughts, curiously enough, were divided between the fair daughter of Alexander Wiggins, and Alexander Wiggins himself; and there was a faint smile hovering about his mustache. As for Sylvester, it must be confessed that he was somewhat uneasy. Polly both appealed and fascinated him: moth-like he hovered close to the flame, and was already singed. He had never met anyone like her; had never beheld such antics, nor listened to such innocently demi-monde talk. It rather bewildered him. Moreover, it worried him, for he felt that Polly could not do and say such things, and still be quite—well— His mother, he knew, would not approve of her. Sylvester squirmed with increasing uneasiness. He had just remembered that his mother did not know where he was. She would be telephoning all over town. And yet, wasn't he twenty-one? Hadn't he the right to a fling? Wild oats and all that sort of thing? Well, Polly was wild enough!

The Pavilion Club is a squat, squatish structure, resembling nothing so much as a chocolate French pastry. When Polly, Sylvester and Cedric arrived Miss Pringle's party was in full swing. A year before such an affair would have proceeded with a vast clamor, the guests observing fewer of the social amenities. Most of the young ladies would have been in knee-length gowns, shaking their shoulders and flaunting bobbed hair. Not so tonight. The younger set was disporting itself in quite a mannerly manner. No one toddled, nor was there in evidence a single shock of bobbed hair. That is, until Polly Wiggins burst upon the scene, followed by two somewhat abashed young gentlemen in afternoon attire.

Chicago's younger set paused in its rhythmic stepping, frankly interested in the arrival of the Season's newest débâutante, the Town's richest youth, and the son of an English peer. It was prepared (was Chicago's younger set) to do homage. Over the modulated gayety of the dance crept a hush. Whereupon Polly, gaining the center of the stage, snapped her fingers, and with a wanton toss of her bobbed hair, cried:

"Let's go! Who's got a drink of gin?"

MIDNIGHT. Miss Pringle's guests still stepped and circled to the jangling music, and in a corner of the Pavilion Club a demure young lady was sitting in earnest conversation with Mr. Ike Fishman.

Mr. Fishman was Chicago's most dauntless social climber: a sharp-eyed, long-nosed sycophant with flaring ears and a too-eager smile. No one had ever been known to invite him to a party: he came regardless. How he did it no one knew, but he had been doing it since that last year of the war, when social distinctions were so loosely drawn. One of the fine points of his procedure was to dance dutifully (albeit clumsily) with all hostesses, out-of-town cousins, unattractive girls, and those veterans of many ball-room campaigns who are to be found wielding ostrich feather fans along the wall.

"Isn't Polly Wiggins dreadful?" the demure young lady was saying to him. "Have you seen the way she's acting tonight?"

"Uh-huh," grinned Ike. He always agreed with everybody: and, too, he was planning to meet this demure young lady's father and sell him some bonds. "I'll say Polly's stepping high and handsome."

"Old, worn-out flapper stunts, too. Why, nobody's acted that way in ages!"

"That's right."

"I should think she'd see that she's not getting away with it. People have been sort of snubbing her tonight."

"Yes, I noticed it."

"But the way Captain Brumby and

that Twombly boy follow her around—”

“Say,” interrupted Ike, “do you know who that tall, gray-haired man is? Standing there behind the pillar?”

“Where? Oh, I see. No, I’ve never noticed him before. He seems to be watching somebody.”

“Looks as if he was watching Captain Brumby.”

“Why, isn’t that odd. . . .”

At that moment, across the room, the Captain was bowing before Polly. They had just finished a dance together, and while there was more enthusiasm than grace to his dancing, Polly still derived a thrill from his presence. Yet she was not at all sure that Sylvester wasn’t just as attractive. He danced more smoothly than the Captain, and there was, in his manner, a wistful something that strangely appealed to her. And it was not his money, either. Surely there was nothing wistful about the Twombly fortune. . . .

On the edge of the dance floor Sylvester was gloomily musing upon the logic that three composed a crowd, and that he himself contributed the odd number. Watching the debonair Britisher with Polly made him uncomfortably aware of his own limitations. He was frankly jealous of Broomestonby, by this time, and had taken a sort of negative dislike to him, for he recognized that Broomestonby was the sort of chap Polly would naturally be attracted to: a dapper man of the world. He, Sylvester, was a dub. It would have been different, of course, if Polly had not been such a startling creature. His attitude was one of mingled awe and admiration: the timorous attitude of a prep school boy toward his first soubrette. Polly fascinated him, yet he was ill at ease about it, for she was, he felt, wild—scandalously wild. . . .

To his amazement, as he ambled up to them when the music stopped, he heard Broomestonby saying:

“I say, Miss Polly, *are* you staying much longer?”

“Oh,” she replied, “I don’t want to roll home yet, Captain.”

“I’m a bit fagged,” said the Captain,

“I say, *would* you mind if I toddle along?”

“Why—no,” she said, “if you must go. . . .”

“I think I’d best.” He smiled wryly. “I’m deucedly tired.”

“Well—old Twombly will see that I get home.”

Sylvester, his heart leaping, blushed. Then the Captain bowed and shook hands with both of them.

“May I,” he asked, “look in on you tomorrow?”

“Yes, do,” invited Polly.

“Good. Well—cherio!”

“Good night.”

As he moved off, Polly sighed. Then abruptly she snapped her fingers and turned to Sylvester.

“You got to see yo’ mammy every night—” she sang. The music was beginning again. “Come on—dance with me!”

On the other side of the polished floor Mr. Ike Fishman and the demure young lady stood up.

“Look there,” observed Ike, “that tall, gray-haired man we noticed is going.” . . .

In the last half hour her spirits seemed to have drooped.

“Uh—do you think,” suggested Sylvester timidly, “I mean, *don’t* you think—we ought to go?”

Polly looked up at him, and there was a faint adumbration of weariness in her expression.

“Oh,” she said, “I don’t care. This party’s pretty dead, anyway.”

To tell the truth, she was not having a particularly exhilarating time. Somehow, the edge had suddenly worn off being a flapper; it had ceased to be amusing. People had not been overly “nice” to her this evening. She sensed now a chill disapproval in the air. . . .

“Yes,” she murmured, a trifle listlessly, “let’s go home.”

Rolling swiftly homeward in the dark interior of the Twombly town car, both were silent. As she leaned back among the cushions, Polly seemed a tired little girl who had played too hard—at play

which had of a sudden lost its zest. She realized now that there was something queer, something unsatisfactory, about being a flapper. In the book it had gone beautifully; in the pavilion it had not gone so well. People appeared surprised, unappreciative—a few even hostile. True enough, Cedric and Sylvester had been captivated by her flapper ways in the afternoon, but she experienced now a disquieting feeling that Sylvester was shocked at the way she had acted. It upset her. Apparently, she had adopted the wrong set of gestures. . . .

In his corner Sylvester felt that her depression had been occasioned by Broomestonby's departure, and he was more than ever jealous of the Englishman. Beneath his waistcoat stirred a wild desire to take Polly in his arms. He had, of course, never in his life done such a thing. . . . And suppose Polly should laugh at him! But she was so—so . . .

Nervously, he essayed to reach out and touch her hand. Polly appeared to offer no objection. Then with a wild swoop he gathered her hand in his. For him, clutching it, an ecstatic moment. Then the car stopped. They were under the Wiggins *porte-cochere*, and Sylvester's chauffeur was opening the door.

"Damn!" muttered Sylvester.

As he assisted Polly from the car he noticed that the windows of the Wiggins house shone with lights, and his eye fell upon a yellow taxicab just ahead in the driveway.

"Why, someone's here—"

"Oh—oh," whispered Polly, "I'll bet my family've come home!"

Came a sudden commotion from within, and the massive front door swung open, revealing Bowker, an expression of agitation on his butlerly face.

"Miss Polly!" he exclaimed, "we've 'ad a orful time 'ere—"

And as Polly and Sylvester stood staring in the doorway, there appeared beyond Bowker a tall, gray-haired man in a black overcoat and London bowler,

firmly clutching the arm of another man. Polly and Sylvester started violently. For the other man was Captain the Honorable Cedric Broomestonby.

"Why—*Captain Brumby!*" cried Polly.

"No, miss," growled the tall man in the bowler, "he only passes himself off as Captain Brumby. I followed him here from the Pavilion club, and surprised him, not ten minutes ago—upstairs opening your father's safe."

"Oh!" gasped Polly, "oh! oh!"

"He is a pearl collector," went on the stranger grimly, "but a different kind. Clever cracksman—this chap. Knew the real Captain Brumby was in America, shooting big game in the Rockies—so he came here. I"—he nodded jerkily—"appened to follow him from London. I'm Inspector Pank, of Scotland Yard."

"And who," demanded Sylvester, "who is *he*?"

"He's got several names," answered the man from Scotland Yard, "but he's best known as the Piccadilly Nipper."

"Oh!" wailed Polly, "how dreadful!"

During this somewhat theatric dénouement the Piccadilly Nipper had been standing with head bent forward, eyes upon the floor. But now he straightened up, shook himself, and without so much as a glance at Polly or Sylvester canted his top hat to a jaunty angle.

"If you don't mind, Inspector," he said, coolly, "let's be on our way."

VII

THEY were standing in front of the embers in the Florentine fireplace, and somewhere a solemn Wiggins clock chimed one. But Sylvester made no move to go. In the last few hours events had moved with such bewildering rapidity. . . . His quondam rival, the Piccadilly Nipper (remarkable fellow!) was, to be sure, out of the way. *That* was a relief, of course. And yet the situation remained difficult.

As she stood gazing wistfully down into the glowing embers, Polly was

very lovely, indeed. Quite the loveliest creature he had ever beheld. Sylvester swallowed hard and made a move toward her; then he halted, straightened his tie, and coughed.

"You—" he mumbled tremulously, "you—standing there now you seem almost—almost shy. I mean, not so—so hard, somehow. . . ."

"W-what?" Polly raised her eyes swiftly—Polly, who, up to the reading of the flapper book the night before, had been the most demure of maidens.

"You—" faltered Sylvester. "In the firelight you—don't look like—a wild woman at all!"

"Wild—woman?" echoed Polly.

"Yes." her *gauche* cavalier stumbled on. "wild woman. I—if it weren't for that—I—"

Sylvester stirred uncomfortably. It was extremely difficult to tell this adorable girl that he dared not introduce her to his mother. In another instant the adorable girl was crying.

"You—you thought t-because I acted—like I d-did—that I was—*bad!* Oh! If you knew how h-hard I tried to—"

Sylvester stared at her in astonishment.

"It was all that old b-book," sobbed Polly. "I didn't w-want to be h-horrid—I only w-wanted people to notice me. . . ."

"You mean," stammered the youth who had been brought up like Little Lord Fauntleroy, "you mean you were only *trying to*—"

"Trying to be a *flapper!* And you thought I w-was—oh, Sylvester. . . ."

"Well, I'll be— There, now! Don't cry." He moved toward her clumsily. "Don't cry—please!"

Out in the hall, Bowker was sitting wearily, with young Mr. Twombly's coat and hat in his arms. His head nodded. . . . And slowly drooped. . . . And after a time he appeared to snore gently.

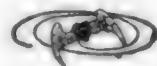


Toll

By Marion Deitrick

THORNS! Yet a honey-sweet drop of dew
Lurks amid petals fresh,
And for this perfume I am willing to
Pay with my bleeding flesh.

Temper! But sometimes a tear-drop too,
And a plea on young lips apart,
And for this honey-sweet bit of you—
I pay with my bleeding heart.



To the Vanquished

By Gordon Arthur Smith

TO the vanquished sometimes go the spoils.

Perhaps you have heard of Jack Brinton—Little Jack, his friends had nicknamed him at the time when his fame and his finances were as small as his stature. Perhaps you have read his name on the cover of the songs you try over on your piano; more likely, though, you have not, for it is seldom that a composer of popular songs becomes popular himself—one hears his music but not his name.

When, in the early years of his marriage, Little Jack dwelt with his wife in a back room on the fourth floor of a boarding house in the 40's scarcely anyone had heard of him, which was not surprising, for in those days he had published but one song and that one a decisive failure. True, his wife had ventured to introduce it occasionally into her vaudeville act, but always, I fear, to the detriment of the act, so that reluctantly she was finally forced by well-meaning managers to desist.

"It don't get across," they assured her—"leaves 'em cold. Stick to the jazz, Clare."

She was billed as Clare Jewel, a name chosen by her when, at the age of seventeen, she had obtained a minor part in a burlesque show. Candor compels us to admit that she obtained the part through her good looks rather than through any notable ability, but sympathy urges me to add that she might have been able to sing attractively enough had she not ruined her voice, as the custom is, by shouting her songs in a hoarse ear-racking bellow. This, however, detracted nothing from the songs them-

selves—they were, as a rule, too bad to spoil.

In due time she graduated from burlesque into vaudeville—three-a-day vaudeville, to be sure—and thence to the chorus of a famous New York institution always on the alert for pulchritude.

Somewhat or other she met Little Jack Brinton, and—no one quite knows why—married him. He was, as I have indicated, a pitiful failure at the age of twenty-six; while she was at least earning enough to feed and shelter herself. From the day of her marriage she fed and sheltered him, too—that is, until long afterward when he awoke one morning and found that all the country was whistling his sentimental ballad: "The End of Dreams." It's been a different story since. Clare is on easy street now.

Poor Little Jack!—puny, thin-chested' stammering, shy, coughing, nervous Little Jack, with his narrow back bent over the piano and his quick white hands scampering up and down over the keys like frightened rabbits!

He played beautifully and, when he was permitted, he played beautiful things—things that Clare had never heard, things, I have no doubt, which he himself improvised to suit his mood. At first Clare was inclined to be proud of the very fact that he played what she termed "high-brow stuff," but before very long her friends disillusioned her by pointing out that the only music that made money was music you could whistle.

"The trouble with Little Jack's stuff," they assured her, "is that you can't tell where the verse ends and the chorus

begins. You don't never know just where to join in and you couldn't if you did."

So, thereafter, Little Jack was forced to abandon the beautiful things in favor of things in which one could "join." That was a pity and for a while he suffered; but his suffering only made him thinner and less confident if possible. Discouragement seized him, and with discouragement came a moodiness which on the surface almost resembled sullenness. He wanted to be alone; he couldn't face even Clare: he was ashamed of himself as a man.

Clare's friends said he was a perpetual grouch and a useless loafer and urged her to leave him; and especially an acrobat called Jameson—a big burly brute of a man with amazing muscles—who lived on the floor below.

"He's no good, that's all," said Jameson—"he's just no good. And what does he do? Why, he just sits around and never opens his mush except to put the food you pay for into it. A man like that ain't worth stickin' to. Ain't now and never will be. What yuh say, Clare—what yuh say? Why don't you and me just pack up and go away together—just you and me—and leave him to dig around for his own meals and rent? It ain't right, I tell yuh, him spongin' on you the way he does—it ain't right."

Whereupon Clare cried a little, somewhat to her surprise for she was not given much to tears, and said: "Well, Jim, I don't know what's right and what's not right, only I know this can't go on forever like this. There's got to come a change somehow."

"Then," said Jim, "let's have it now," and he tried to catch her in his powerful arms.

He was not clumsy, but she succeeded in eluding him and she calmed him temporarily with half-promises.

Temporarily, I say, because the next day, when Little Jack was out making a forlorn tour of the music publishers, Jim Jameson returned to the assault. He was a confident brute—well, perhaps, not exactly a brute, but a man

calloused by his successes with women of his own class. Let us put him down as an ignorant cynic who neither saw nor had ever heard any reason for not helping himself where he could; who had no fear of God or man and very little fear of woman.

The interview that day grew stormy. "Listen, Clare," he said, beginning as mildly as he was able—"listen, Clare, if that little white-livered runt's goin' to stand between I and you I'll come up here and beat him to a pulp—and I can do it, too, with one hand. Yuh know that; don't yuh?"

She nodded. Yes, she knew that.

"Well, whaddyuh say, then? Will I do it? Will I put him out the way? Or will yuh come with me peaceful without sayin' a word to anybody. I don't want to hurt him if yuh don't want me to, but I'll just simply kill him if he's goin' to stand in our way."

She shivered a little at the threat; she said to herself: "He's just talkin' big—there ain't no danger his doin' it." But she wasn't sure there was no danger, and she found that in the uncertainty there lay a certain pleasurable sensation. Jim Jameson was without doubt a very powerful man who shouldered his way ruthlessly through the world, and she admired his very power. He contrasted so flagrantly with mild, insignificant Little Jack that—well, violent reactions are natural.

"Give me a week, Jim," she besought him—"give me just a week to make up my mind. Honest, I'll tell you one way or the other in a week—honest I will, Jim."

It was not what he had hoped for, but it was perhaps what he had expected. He frowned at her with thick black brows, as if trying to win her by intimidation. Indeed, intimidation had always been one of his most successful weapons.

"Honest, Jim," she repeated, her voice quavering under his scrutiny.

"Well," he said gruffly, "what day's today?"

"Thursday," said she. "I'll tell yuh next Thursday, Jim."

"You'll tell me 'yes' next Thursday,"

he said, "or there'll be murder in this room. No foolin' with me, now, mind yuh—no foolin'."

"No, Jim, no foolin'!"

He turned, then, and without more words went out of the door, slamming it violently behind him as a final proof, doubtless, of his strength.

So all that week Little Jack was on trial, and since he suspected nothing of the fact, his conduct in no way improved his case. It was not that he was actively objectionable—he was never that to Clare—but his discouragement with himself and with life was so profound that he had ceased to make an effort. Had she come to him then and asked him to let her go he would, I think, have said in his mildest voice: "My dear, you have stood it for a long time. I'm nothing but a sinking ship. Better get a life raft of some sort before I founder. Good-bye, my dear, and if there's a God may He bless you."

Then he would have turned to the piano, I think, and played gently until she had left him: and then I think he would have ceased to play because of his tears. And then he would have killed himself as quietly and inconspicuously as possible.

But Clare did not warn him that he was on trial and so he, who for a long time had been schooling himself to conceal his emotions, in the belief that any display of his could not fail to be objectionable to her, continued in his aloofness, so miserable that he was ashamed to laugh, ashamed to look her in the eyes, ashamed to eat the food which she paid for, ashamed to be dependent upon her for his very existence.

Their conversation when they were together—which was seldom—had dwindled to almost nothing. Music was never mentioned by either of them to the other, for music to them connoted failure. Nor was money referred to—and for this reticence Clare certainly deserved praise, since it was she alone who ever saw money. But she did not rub salt into what even she knew was a painful wound.

When she went to her work in the theatre in the evening, he would sit down at the piano and labor over his futile but attractive little songs—those songs with no chorus to them—songs as mild and pathetic as their composer, full of whimsical harmonies and quaint, unusual intervals—songs that the public would not whistle and that the publishers would not buy. They reminded you a little of Debussy—of a hesitant, ashamed Debussy, bereft of all confidence in himself.

Little Jack would shake his head over them dubiously, groan impotently and then play some of Debussy's own songs just to prove to himself he did not deserve to rank with the master. He invariably proved it, but it merely served to render him more abject.

And all that week, I say, Little Jack was on trial. Clare was watching him, weighing him and finding him sadly wanting.

One night she surprised him by asking: "Little Jack, what'd yuh say to leavin' New York—quittin' it for good?"

He hesitated, glanced at her and then quickly lowered his eyes.

"Why, my dear," he answered, "I don't know. It's just as you want. I—I have nothing to say."

"No," she observed sharply, "you never seem to have."

He flushed and made some stammering remark about his being aware that he was a pretty useless sort of a person; and she did not trouble to contradict him.

In truth, he was beyond her comprehension. For one thing he was of finer clay than she, and she was unconsciously awed by his superior refinement, while at the same time she was disgusted by his apparent worthlessness. Had his defects been those to which she was accustomed in other men, she would have forgiven them with ease, perhaps even have respected him the more. Drunkenness and infidelity—she knew most men to be capable of both. A blow or two from his fist she might have received almost with equa-

nimity. She would have shed a few tears and called him a few names and let it go at that.

But Little Jack's defects were negative ones, his sins were of omission, not of commission. Jim Jameson, the acrobat—there was a man for you, now! He at least was not one to lie down on the job of life—not one to slink around the room like a whipped dog.

She sighed a little, for she knew that at the end of the week she would go away with Jameson if he wanted her. But she added to herself, half regretfully: "If only Little Jack had the guts to do something that'd stop me!"

Unfortunately Little Jack, unconscious of what was at stake, remained passive throughout the week, and with Thursday came Jim Jameson clamoring for his answer.

He came at ten o'clock in the morning, an hour at which Little Jack haunted Broadway and the inexorable music-publishers, and he came confidently and with his magnificent chest well out and his biceps straining against his sleeves. He slung his hat to the floor and said: "Well?"

She looked at him and found him superb—his close-cropped black hair, his hard gray eyes under the bushy brows, his heavy jaw, his white teeth, his big bull neck, even his silk shirt and his checked suit and his cream-colored waistcoat and his bamboo cane and his cheap pin—all, all she found superb.

"I'll start packin'," she said. And she added bitterly: "It won't take long."

Rather to her surprise he made no movement to embrace her, but instead turned his back and looked out of the window.

"That's the stuff," he said contentedly. "Go to it quick. When's Little Jack come home?"

She assured him that Little Jack did not usually return until noon. There was plenty of time.

"He'd better not return until we're gone," said Jim—"not if he wants to live."

She laughed nervously—almost hysterically:

"I ain't sure he even wants to live," said she.

In one corner of the room, concealed behind a curtain, was a small shabby trunk, worn out by the vicissitudes of one-night stands. Clare carried it to the middle of the room and in silence commenced to pack her belongings. Jim, also in silence, remained at the window, his back to her. Now that he had gained his point he was a trifle vexed with himself. He was shouldering a responsibility that might turn out to be a most annoying one. Besides, the girl had given in far too easily—a fact which argued perhaps not so much for his attractions as for the helplessness of her present existence; and he didn't particularly relish having people driven to him by desperation only.

"Little Jack got any idea what's up?" he inquired briefly.

"No—of course he ain't."

"Don't know the bird's leavin' the cage, uh?"

"No."

"Wouldn't mind, I guess, if he did know."

To that she answered nothing; but she was aware that it was an insult to her.

He looked impatiently at his watch and tapped his cane against the calf of his huge leg.

"Most ready?" he inquired, favoring her at last with a glance.

She was kneeling by the trunk in the middle of the room, folding and smoothing filmy silk and lace things of which he knew not the names. She had made them for herself and they were in consequence rather incongruously superior to the simple and inexpensive tailored suit that she habitually wore. He smiled condescendingly.

"You wimmin," he said, "wear your best junk underneath."

"Uh-huh," she agreed quietly. "That's what makes us different from you men. All you got's on the outside."

The retort amused him and for the first time that day he put his arms

about her as she knelt and kissed her on the back of the neck.

"You fresh kid," he said genially.

As he stood up they heard footsteps on the staircase. He, not recognizing them, made no move; but Clare, who recognized them instantly, scrambled to her feet with a little gasp. And where the rouge was not, her face was quite white.

"It's him," she said—"it's Little Jack."

She was terrified—so terrified that she stood there beside her shabby old trunk, her arms limp at her sides, incapable of action, incapable of movement, incapable of thought. But Jim Jameson, the acrobat, betrayed his pleasure unmistakably.

"So it's him, is it? Well, I'm glad of it. He'll get his good if it's him."

"Jim—don't," she whispered.

"Don't?—Don't what? Don't kill the little shrimp?"

"Don't touch him," she said. "Oh, don't, Jim! Just let me talk to him quiet and—and it'll be all right. Honest, Jim, it'll be all right."

"It'll be all right," he assured her. "Don't huh worry—it'll be all right. He ain't goin' to as much as open his face before it'll be all right. For us."

The door-knob rattled and turned; the door opened; Little Jack came in. He was smiling to himself, strangely enough—smiling for the first time in months.

"Hello," he said cheerfully, and stopped short. His eyes moved from Clare to Jim and then to the open trunk brimming over with silk and cheap lace. The smile slowly left his face and he put an unsteady hand to his head.

"What," he asked vaguely, "is the trouble?"

"There ain't no trouble," volunteered the acrobat calmly, "there ain't no trouble at all. Clare's leavin' you, that's all."

"Clare's leaving me?" repeated Little Jack.

"That's what I said," answered Jim. "Clare's leavin' you. Me and her, and whaddyuh got to say about it? Anything?"

Little Jack regarded Jim for an instant as a child might regard some large, ugly animal in the zoo. Then he turned to his wife.

"Clare," he said, "I can't make head or tail out of this. What's the man saying?"

"The truth," she said, with her eyes persistently on the trunk. "I'm leavin' huh, Little Jack."

"I don't believe it," said he.

She pointed at the trunk as proof.

"I'm almost through packin'," she said.

"Finish it up," urged Jim impatiently. "Never mind that runt."

Then Little Jack did something that surprised them both, and that, I think, surprised himself no less than them.

He threw back his thin little shoulders, straightened up his thin little body and pointed a thin, shaking little arm at Jim Jameson. He must have ludicrously and pathetically resembled a bantam cock about to crow his defiance.

"Get out of this room," he said, with tears of rage in his eyes and in his voice—"get out of this room, you big swine!"

The acrobat smiled patronizingly down upon him.

"I'm gettin' out," said he calmly, "just as soon as Clare finishes up her packin'! Hurry it up, Clare, the runt's gettin' impatient."

But Clare did not move; nor did she vouchsafe Jameson so much as a glance. She was staring with fixed, wondering eyes at Little Jack.

"He'll kill you," she murmured, not as if she was afraid of him, but in the manner of one imparting some useful but not startling information.

"Get out of this room," repeated Little Jack, ignoring her—"get out or I'll put you out!"

The acrobat took a leisurely step forward, seized Little Jack's outstretched arm and, wrenching it, spun him around on his feet and tossed him to the floor—not overhard, not apparently in anger, not with intention to hurt.

Little Jack jumped up immediately and fell upon Jameson, kicking, scream-

ing, beating at him with his puny fists.

"You big swine," he kept sobbing—"you great big swine!"

It was like the attack of a madman and it disconcerted Jim; and, disconcerting him, it angered him.

"Now," he said, "you're goin' to get it good," and he seized Little Jack in his huge arms, swung him over and around his head as if he were a pillow and, once more, sent him crashing to the floor—this time with violence and intent to kill.

Little Jack lay, moaning, a crumpled forlorn heap where he had fallen. But he kept repeating: "You big swine, you great big swine."

"Will I finish yuh?" cried Jameson. "Say it again and I'll finish yuh!"

"You big swine," said Little Jack, "you great big swine."

At that Jim leaned over and hit Little Jack as he lay writhing on the floor—hit with all his strength just over the heart. Little Jack gave a gasp and ceased to writhe. Then Jim turned to Clare to claim the reward for his valor.

She was huddled up in a corner of the room, her face in her hands, her body rocking forward and backward. She had heard but she had not dared open her eyes to see.

"Well," said Jim, not too exuberantly, "I've fixed him."

It was beginning to dawn on him, perhaps, that his victory was not overglorious since from the first victory had been a foregone conclusion. He reflected that it might have been better, all things considered, to have refrained from administering the knockout blow after his victim was down. And such a funny victim! Well, it wasn't his fault that his victim was puny. Why didn't men develop their physiques—especially if they were going to call other men dirty swine?

"Well," he repeated—"let's go."

She raised her head and stood up.

"You go," she said quietly. "I'm stayin'."

He looked at her, saw she was serious and swore the greatest and most profane oath that he knew.

"Shut up," she urged—"you—you damn murderer. Shut up and get out of here before I call in the cops."

"Oh," said he. "So that's it, is it? So that's it?"

She nodded. "Yeh," she answered, "that's it."

Thus far she had refrained from looking at Little Jack—she had not dared. But now she crossed the room swiftly to kneel beside him. Jim towered above her, sullen, cursing all women and the fickleness of all women.

"You done your best," said Clare at length, "but he's not dead. Get out."

She lifted Little Jack in her arms and bore him to the bed. She busied herself undressing him, but at intervals she would turn on Jim and, seeing him still standing there, surveying her, she would say briefly: "Get out, I tell you—get out."

She fetched a small bottle of brandy from a cupboard, poured it into a glass and put it to Little Jack's lips. He moaned a little but did not stir.

"You still here?" she said to Jim.

Then she went to the window, opened it and said: "I'm goin' to call the cops."

This roused Jameson and he grasped her arm and dragged her back into the room.

"Here," he said, "none o' that. I'll go if yuh want. There ain't no good startin' a row. I guessed all the time you was a poor sorta fish and I guess Little Jack there, or what's left of him, is plenty good enough for yuh. Take him and welcome. I'm through."

"Yeh," she agreed decisively, "you're through."

"And glad of it," he concluded. Then, in farewell, he seized her two wrists and said venomously: "You're low—that's all you are—you're low."

She nodded in acquiescence.

"Yeh," she said, "you're right. I'm low. Now get out."

When he had gone she flung herself down beside the bed and began to kiss one of Little Jack's hands—kissed it repeatedly with little moans of agony and contriteness.

"I'm low, Little Jack," she whispered, "I'm low as hell."

Little Jack stirred and opened his eyes.

"It's hard to sing it, I know," he whispered, "especially where it changes into the minor."

"What, Little Jack—what's that you said?"

"Tell the big swine to get out or I'll kill him," said Little Jack.

"He's gone, dear."

He roused himself, tried to brace himself with his elbow, but fell back groaning.

"What's wrong?" he asked vaguely. "What's wrong, Clare? I don't seem to remember. Was there an accident?"

"You got hurt, dear, but you're goin' to be all right."

"I don't seem to remember much. Oh, yes, after I'd sold the song—"

"After you'd sold the song, Little Jack? What song?"

"Didn't I tell you? Why, I came home right away to tell you. I came home early to tell you that I'd sold 'The End of Dreams.'"

"You sold it!" she cried.

"Yes, of course," he said, a little petulantly. "I thought I told you."

"Oh, Little Jack—how wonderful!"

"Yes—yes. But then what happened?"

"Never mind that now," she pleaded. "Wait till you're better. So you sold 'The End of Dreams.' It's funny it should've been called that," she added, half to herself.

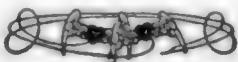
"What? I can't hear what you say."

"I say it's funny it should've been called 'The End of Dreams.'"

"Funny? What's funny? Why is it funny? I don't understand what you mean."

"Well," she explained softly, "I was just thinkin' it was funny because it seems to me it may be the beginnin' of dreams. The end of nightmare, maybe, but the beginnin' of pleasant dreams. Lie quiet, Little Jack, while I go and get the doctor."

To the vanquished, you see, sometimes go the spoils.



Here I Lie Upon My Bed

By Helen Hoyt

HERE I lie upon my bed
With a pillow at my head,
With a blanket at my feet,
Pleasant coverlet and sheet—
Everything that I can tell
Why a maiden should lie well;
Everything that I can say
Why a maiden should lie gay;
But my lying is not good
For my very maidenhood.



. . . Are any of them "different," or do all husbands play a little love game, occasionally, on the side? . . . Meredith Nicholson has a new answer to the old query.

They're All Alike

By *Meredith Nicholson*

GRACE CARSON was not by nature adventurous. If it hadn't been for that silly talk at Sue Layton's luncheon about the prevalence of the wandering eye among twentieth century husbands she would never have thought of doing anything foolhardy.

If a husband, following the devices and desires of his own wicked heart, flirted and cut up generally, there was no sound reason why a wife shouldn't enjoy a like privilege. This was the revolutionary doctrine announced by Alma Townley, a charming young matron from Baltimore, who was the guest of honor at Mrs. Layton's table. Mrs. Townley sketched several little affairs of her own, which she excused on the ground that she was only keeping the balance even with her husband.

"They're all alike!" she declared. "They love us and all that, and wouldn't do anything to give us a moment's unhappiness—oh, not for worlds! But out of sight is out of mind with all of them."

Grace was first shocked and then fascinated by this attitude toward the marital relationship, though, to be sure, nothing in her four years of happy married life justified any such sweeping assertion. Her Philip she knew to be the finest fellow in the world; he worked hard and, at twenty-eight, was already enjoying a good practice in the law. One or two other girls had brightened his horizon before he fell in love with Grace, but they had vanished the moment she appeared. He had given her no cause for jealousy, and his loyalty and devotion were touched with a fine

chivalry. They were the best of chums and comrades, and their friends called them the "inseparable Carsons."

With all the strength of her healthy young being, Grace resented the cynical tone of the table talk and was not slow to express her disapproval.

"Phil isn't like that at all!" she cried. "I'd trust him round the world."

"Where's your Phil now?" demanded Mrs. Carbury. "He must have left town in a hurry, for you know you only telephoned me at four Monday to say he couldn't come to my dinner that night."

Grace colored and her eyes fell as they laughed at her discomfiture, for it was a dismaying fact that she did not know where Phil had gone! She was at the Curley's playing bridge Monday when he called her to the telephone to say that he was leaving town unexpectedly and might be absent several days. He would write, he said. It was now Wednesday and he had not written; and for the first time it occurred to her as extraordinary that he hadn't mentioned his destination. In his haste he had very likely forgotten it and with the Curleys waiting she hadn't taken time to ask.

"Oh, he went to New York on business," she answered with ill-feigned ease

"Oh yes, it's always business!" the Baltimorean remarked malevolently, "but always with a little pink social trimming on the edges!"

"Isn't it astonishing," remarked another guest, "how easily men pick up acquaintances? In skirts, I mean. I run down to New York often for a day

of shopping and frequently eat my luncheon and dinner alone. But no man ever does that. I say that if it's all right for a man to amuse himself by taking a woman his wife doesn't know out to lunch his wife ought to have a like privilege if she meets a man who looks interesting."

"If I ever tried my hand at it," remarked Grace with a defiant glance in her eyes, "I should certainly never tell."

WHEN she reached home there was still no message from Phil. She might call his office and ask where he had gone, but this would only betray her ignorance, and that wouldn't do at all. And then, just as she dismissed this from her mind, Phil's clerk called her on the telephone and asked for Mr. Carson's address.

"He's in Buffalo today," she lied instantly, "but I expect him home in the morning."

If any proof were needed that Phil was absent on a questionable errand it was supplied by the disclosure that his office did not know his whereabouts. She excused herself from a bridge party and spent the day in self-torture. A month earlier her young unmarried sister had gone to California with her father, who was suffering from a nervous breakdown. He was very ill when he left home, and two weeks had passed since she had heard from them. This, too, was on her mind; and under her resentment at her husband's silence there lay a dark foreboding of impending calamity which she was unable to dispel. Imperative telegrams to her sister at the last address given on the Coast had brought no reply. She did not understand this, and it seemed to her that Phil and all the rest of the world had suddenly deserted her.

She continued to hope for a letter or telegram that would set her fears at rest, but when morning brought no message of any kind, her resentment at Phil's silence became an acute jealousy which demanded expression in action.

She determined to go away for a few days so that Phil on his return might

understand that unexplained absences were a game two could play at. She would show him that she was quite as independent as he. It would be easy to run down to New York for a few days and try amusing herself in her own fashion.

Once the idea had taken hold of her she made her preparations rapidly. Packing a small trunk and a suitcase, she summoned a taxi with a feeling of elation. The prospect of slipping the leash for a reckless dash into the world had brought a bright color to her cheeks.

II

SHE saw with relief that there was no one she knew in the train. Comfortably established in the parlor car, she sought her place in a novel she had been reading the night before, but the adventures of the heroine were tame in comparison with those she felt stretching before her. The novel slipped from her lap, and the gentleman in the next chair put down his newspaper and picked it up for her. She modestly decided that he would not do. He was too much of a gentleman to experiment upon; she must wait for an inferior article—someone who hadn't quite his fine air of breeding.

Her heart beat pit-a-pat when, in the most courteous of voices, he remarked:

"That book is having a great run; it's the year's biggest hit!"

"I'm enjoying it very much," she answered, though manifestly she had not been enjoying it so greatly, since she had fallen to dreaming and suffered it to slip from her hand. There was a long silence in which his attention seemed to be fixed upon the flying landscape observable through the opposite window. She returned to her book, thinking he had forgotten her.

"Would you think, just looking at me, that I'm terribly down on my luck?" he demanded abruptly.

"I certainly should not have guessed it." She regarded him gravely.

"I have lost something that I never had," he said slowly. "You may think it's my senses I've lost!"

"It must be something you coveted—maybe a scarfpin, a dog, a horse or—a woman!"

"It's neither a scarfpin, a dog nor a horse. And as for the woman—I don't know her name."

"Really!" exclaimed Grace. "Then your chances of finding her are rather slim, I should say."

"They are indeed. I will tell you everything—everything I know, which is little enough. I met her on a train or my way up the western coast, bound for Portland. That was just ten days ago. She seemed greatly troubled, and I think I may have been of some service in cheering her a little."

"But you certainly could have learned her identity."

"No; it was this way: When our train reached Portland some friends took me to their house, and in the flurry at the station I lost track of her. I tried to find her, of course, and a hotel porter sent me to Seattle after a young lady who was not at all the person I was looking for. It was curious that she said nothing in our talk that gave me the slightest clue to her identity. As I look back now it would seem that she may have had a reason for doing so. I mean some reason other than a wish to get rid of me. Conceited as you may think me, I must say that I think she liked me; we hit it off together splendidly."

"I wish I could do something to help you," said Grace, seriously.

"There is, I suppose, really no such thing as love at first sight?" he asked.

"I'm open-minded on that question. I've known what appeared to be such cases."

"Do you know," he said earnestly, "please don't think me impertinent, but she was like you; you instantly suggested her."

Grace's heart fluttered wildly as she decided that he was flirting with her and that the story of his quest for the unknown girl was merely a subterfuge.

They were nearing the city. To ask him to dine with her would not be so heinous; she resolved to risk it.

"Perhaps if you haven't another engagement you would dine with me?" she remarked, drawing on her glove. "I hate horribly dining alone."

He was surprised; but his surprise betrayed itself only fleetingly and he gave his answer as though there were nothing extraordinary in the idea of being invited to dine by a lady upon whose hospitality he had no claim whatever.

"You are very kind; you do me great honor; I shall be delighted."

"Shall we say seven o'clock, at the Glenarm? And we might go to see 'What Happened to Hezekiah.' I understand it's a most amusing comedy."

"I'm allowing you to pay for my food, but you must let me have some share in the evening's entertainment. I'll be the host for the theater. My name is John W. Graham and my permanent address is the Thackeray Club, though I am rather permanently not there!"

His name meant nothing to her, but his membership in the Thackeray was an excellent recommendation. Phil had often remarked that the Thackeray was the only club in New York he cared to belong to and he had been very proud when at last his name adorned the waiting list.

He took charge of her baggage check and quickly had her trunk placed in a taxi in which they drove to the Glenarm.

"Please don't trouble further," he said as he handed her out. "At seven you will find me on the mezzanine."

III

SHE had never been to the Glenarm before, and she had chosen it for the reason that none of her friends at home patronized it. It was big enough to be lost in, and she dressed with a timorous joy in her complete obliteration. She summoned a maid to hook her dress, and when she was ready idled about her room until a few minutes after seven to avoid appearing too eager to keep the appointment.

He came toward her quickly, looking

very distinguished in evening clothes. The waiter called him by name and led them to a table at the side of the big dining-room.

"I am your guest," he said, "just as completely as though I were in your own house; so I positively decline to order my food."

A glance over the room satisfied her that there was no one in the place she knew. Graham, however, bowed several times to acquaintances.

"Please don't think I'm trying to draw you out," he said. "My curiosity is dead in the general joy of being here, but if I should be obliged to introduce you to someone I should have to call you something. How would Adams do for a pseudonym? It's historic, sounds conservative and begins with A."

"Admirable," she murmured.

"And if I am called upon to address you more intimately in the presence of any friend I may run into, we'd better have a given name ready. To tackle the A's again, there's Alice, Alma, Agatha, Abigail—"

"I choose Alma," she interrupted, "because it's so different from my own truly name."

"Good!" he exclaimed. "Now that these trifling details are disposed of, I have startling news for you, though it's not very satisfactory from my standpoint. I stepped into the Arlington to explain to an elderly aunt of mine who lives there that I couldn't dine with her as I had promised by wire—because of a pressing business engagement. She noticed my white tie with a cynical eye and no doubt has already cut me out of her will. It was as I left her apartment that I ran into the incomparable one!"

"Then I make haste to excuse you! I have no right to detain you now that you have found her."

"But you can hardly say that I have found her. I stopped short in the hall and put out my hand, but she passed me like an offended empress. It was the cut direct."

"Singular, when you had parted amiably."

"All of that!" He smiled lightly, but his eyes were grave. "The thought of that girl has tortured me. I was hard hit. I have had my little affairs, but never anything like this. The thought that I might never see her again cut me deep. It was a great relief that you tolerated me.

"You didn't say what you did when the lady refused to recognize you. Your story ends or begins right there."

"Oh, I forgot my manners and did a very ungentlemanly thing. I took careful note of the number of the room she popped into and as they know me in the Arlington office I made bold to ask the room clerk who was in 918. He gave me the name without a question. She is Miss Mary Porter."

"A charming name," Grace murred.

"She registered from Chicago; that's all I could learn."

"I can see that your problem is a perplexing one. I'm going to let my woman's intuitions work on it a little."

Fortune was favoring her escapade. To be sure Graham had frankly confessed his love for another woman, but this did not dull the edge of the adventure, but gave her a sense of security. His courtesy and deference left nothing to be desired, and his confidences were flattering.

The humor of "What Happened to Hezekiah" already had the house roaring when they arrived. When the lights went up at the end of the first act Grace satisfied herself by a hasty glance at her neighbors that she was among strangers. She was very happy; not in a long time had she enjoyed herself so thoroughly. It was a great thing to be free. Her delight was that of a child in stolen sweets.

"I have laughed until I am hungry again," said Graham at the end. "Suppose we go to the Goring for a bite of supper? It's quiet there and we can talk some more."

"This has all been wonderful," he said when they had disposed of their supper to the accompaniment of bright impersonal talk. "I suppose that now like

naughty little children we should say goodby and never meet again, but I don't like that; the thought of it makes me very lonesome."

"I wish," she said wistfully, "I could be of some service to you. That in a way would justify these hours we've spent together. I never did this sort of thing before."

"I knew that without your telling me, so don't apologize. If I were Galahad in silver armor I would have spurned your suggestion and you would have spent the evening most circumspectly at home while I roamed the streets in a thoroughly miserable frame of mind."

"Your behavior has been perfect and I haven't a regret! But to go back. I am not disposed to accept the fair one's conduct as final. There must be some reason for the girl's refusal to recognize you, something not related to you in any way. Perhaps—perhaps I might go to see her. My ignorance of you is, to be sure, magnificent, but I could at least vouch for you as a gentleman."

"You could—you would—"

"Certainly I would! I would have nothing to lose for myself and I might gain something for you."

"To do that you should know more of me; for your own protection you should have just a few facts."

He scribbled several addresses on the back of a calling card and gave it to her.

"I believe those people will all vouch for me as a law-abiding citizen."

They were indeed good names, which anyone with any knowledge of New York would recognize instantly.

"I shall do my best for you," she said determinedly.

"Whether you succeed or fail I shall always be grateful," he said as he bade her goodby in the Glenarm office. "My cause is vastly strengthened by the charm and wit of my ambassador."

They parted with the understanding that she would call him at the Thackeray at one the next day.

"Was it really so dreadful?" she asked herself as she lay in bed waiting for sleep to come. Phil had never

scolded her, and she spent much time in speculation as to just what he would say when she told him, as sooner or later she knew she would tell him. With a woman's innate zest for matchmaking, she felt that some fun might be got out of her lightly assumed role of envoy, on behalf of a chance acquaintance, to a young woman she knew not at all. The girl might be disagreeable; indeed, from Graham's account of his meeting with her in the Arlington, she had every reason to assume that her interview on the morrow might cause her serious discomfiture.

IV

As she had determined to take an afternoon train, she had set eleven o'clock as the hour for her visit.

She dressed herself with care and crossing to the Avenue disposed of some small items of shopping to while away the time. Just how to announce herself to the girl in number 918 had troubled her; if she knocked without warning the door might be closed in her face. When she reached the hotel her errand suddenly became distasteful. An immediate rebuff would very likely follow the announcement of her assumed name over the telephone. But her pride was roused and she had no thought of reporting to Graham that her courage had failed her.

She nodded to the clerk, took up the receiver and called with all assurance for number 918. A woman's voice answered instantly, a tired and slightly tremulous voice, she thought.

"Miss Porter, this is Miss Adams."

"The young lady Dr. Barkett spoke of? Please come right up. I hadn't expected you so soon."

The ease with which she had accomplished this took her breath away. To gain access to Miss Porter under false pretenses was decidedly not the best way to win the friendly audience her cause demanded. Still, in explaining the misrepresentation she would risk nothing beyond a brusque dismissal.

She had hung up the receiver and

was pondering her next step when the room whirled round her and she clutched the edge of the counter for support. For with his eyes straight before him Phil, her husband, walked briskly from the entrance to the desk, asked the number of Miss Porter's room, and, without troubling to announce himself, strode toward the elevator and disappeared.

It was a blow, the sharpest of her life. She had not really suspected that Phil's unaccountable absence from home was due to an infatuation for another woman; she had merely taunted herself with that idea in her pique at his silence, strengthened by the foolish babble at Sue Layton's.

No wonder Miss Porter, having flirted with Graham in the West, was quite anxious to be through with him now to avoid the chance of an embarrassing meeting with her married lover. Any timidity she had felt vanished; she now had sufficient cause for intruding upon Miss Porter, and all manner of denunciatory phrases framed themselves in her mind with which to assail Phil for his infamous duplicity. An enormous curiosity possessed her to know what manner of woman it was that had stolen Phil away from her. Her ties with him were already severed; no legal decree could have freed her more completely than her own will. It would be a joy to confront them that Phil might know that, clever as he was, she was much the cleverer.

In the crowded elevator she laughed suddenly, a queer, ironic laugh that caused the other passengers to stare at her curiously.

Voces ceased suddenly within when she knocked at number 918. She was repeating her knock insistently when the door opened and a woman's voice said courteously, "Come in, won't you, please?"

She stepped from the dim hall into a room so flooded with light from the eastern windows that she was blinded for a moment. Then as her eyes became accustomed to the glare she found her gaze meeting the stare of a young woman who cried aloud, a faint startled

cry of amazed recognition. It seemed an eternity that they confronted each other, both held by a surprise so great that it seemed to exercise a physical compulsion upon them.

It was Grace who found herself first. "So it's you, is it?" she said harshly, her face very white.

It was her sister Alice who had opened the door.

"You thought I would never know; you thought you could deceive me," said Grace accusingly, and closed the door.

"Phil must have told you; you would never have known," moaned Alice, and with a gesture of despair she walked toward the window and flung herself down in a chair.

"Where is Phil now?" Grace demanded, following her like an avenging angel and glancing about the room; but Alice had hidden her face in her hands and paid no heed to her.

"I had always loved you; you were not only my sister but my dearest friend," said Grace pitilessly. "It doesn't seem possible that you have done this. When you stopped writing me from California I thought nothing of it; and when Phil left home suddenly without giving me any warning or telling me where he was going I never thought that you two were meeting here. He is free; I tell you now that he is free. And as the years pass I hope that sometime you may realize what a dastardly thing you have done, not to any chance woman whose husband you've fancied but to your own sister!"

Alice had ceased sobbing and sat erect in her chair staring at Grace as though she had been a ghost, or better, a crazed woman pouring out senseless vituperations.

"But—Grace—please, Grace, give me just a moment," she pleaded, lifting her arms imploringly.

"There is nothing you can say to me now or any other time. Let me congratulate you upon the ease with which you have hidden Phil. I suppose you have learned how to manage such things very cleverly," she went on bitterly.

"Oh, you are cruel! You don't know

how cruel and unjust you are!" cried the girl.

"I know that you have both grossly deceived me! I am only glad that I found it out first myself and didn't have to wait for others to tell me!"

In spite of herself the tears came. Something in her sister's appearance and manner—her worn look—troubled her. The girl now sat dumb before her accuser. Several times she attempted to speak, but the words would not come.

"I think there is nothing more to be said," Grace remarked finally.

She was half way to the door when Alice sprang after her and caught her fiercely by the shoulders.

"You're mad; quite mad!" she cried. "It was to protect you, to save you from humiliation that I appealed to Phil."

"Don't try heroics! You had given me not the slightest hint that you were leaving California, and Phil disappeared mysteriously without a word to tell me that he was meeting you here. Let go of me! I never want to see you again!"

Alice shook her as an impatient mother shakes a child, helpless to make it understand.

"I couldn't tell you; I never meant to tell you! Phil had made me promise that you should never know."

"Know!" Grace exclaimed derisively. "Do you think I am so stupid that I don't understand now? Where did you leave father when you ran away for this pretty little liaison with Phil?"

The girl's grip loosened and she sank to the floor moaning. The door into the adjoining room opened and Phil Carson stood stupidly staring at his wife and the sobbing girl at her feet.

"What has hapened, Grace? How did you get here?" he asked, but his tone was calm, without anger or surprise. He sprang to the prostrate girl, lifted her gently to the bed, and seized a carafe and splashed water upon her face.

"Poor little kid," he murmured. "She had a sad time of it, and I suppose your turning up was the last straw. She has told you everything, I suppose," he said, without turning his head.

Grace remained on the spot where Alice had caught hold of her. The cool fashion in which Phil ignored her deepened her anger. She had caught him in a secret meeting with her own sister and he was paying not the slightest heed to her. He had seated himself on the edge of the bed and was tenderly stroking the girl's brow.

"Please see if there's smelling salts on the chiffonier. I think she's coming around," he said as the girl sighed deeply.

Grace found the bottle of salts and handed it to him.

"I think I will go," she said lifelessly. He looked at her squarely for the first time.

"My God, Grace, you mustn't take it like this!" he exclaimed.

"Will you please tell me how you expected me to take it?" she demanded.

"I expected you to take it like the brave woman you are! There will be no publicity, no disgrace; I've taken care of all that. It was Alice's wish to spare your feelings in every way."

"Yes; I gathered as much from her!" she replied coldly.

"She's been superb, wonderful! I had never fully realized how wonderful the dear child is!"

"Now that you know her fine qualities," she said slowly, "you don't need me any more."

He realized at last that they were talking at cross purposes and jumped to his feet.

"For God's sake, Grace, what's the matter with you? You said Alice had told you; I assumed she had told you everything! You've got to buck up and help take care of her. The strain of the last few weeks has told on the child and unless we are careful we will have a case of nervous prostration on our hands. I'll clear out and let you get her into bed. If you're too upset to do it, I'll call a maid."

His tone was sharp and peremptory. He had never spoken to her in such a tone before. Her mind was a whirl of conflicting doubts and questions, but she mechanically drew off her gloves.

"I'm all right now," said Alice. "I never fainted before in all my life. How very queer it is!"

"Oh, it was only the long strain," said Phil reassuringly, stroking her hands. "And you hadn't expected to see Grace. We had plotted to keep it from you, Grace, you know." And then swinging round he struck his palms smartly together. "How did you get here, Grace? Alice, you didn't send for her? . . . Well, we won't trouble about that," he said, seeing a look of distress cross Alice's face. "It's a comfort to have Grace here anyhow, now that it's all over!"

His easy acceptance of her presence added to her bewilderment. She groped in the dark for any possible explanation of Alice's return from the West and her meeting with Phil. They had spoken of their wish to protect her, and this left her in the air. A great humility fell upon her. Why they should wish to protect her she did not know, but the anger had left her heart the moment her hands touched the girl on the bed. Alice was two years her junior and their mother having died when they were very young Grace had early formed the habit of mothering her sister. Alice was a girl of spirit with far more dash and daring than she, and Grace had always loved her gaiety.

"Call me if you need anything," said Phil, and retired to the room adjoining.

The moment they were alone Alice said very softly, with all the sweetness and tenderness in the world, "You poor goose, I want you to kiss me," and when Grace bent down and their lips met Alice's arms clasped her neck convulsively. "Oh, you dear silly Grace! He must never know how foolish you were. I'm all right now, and I don't want to be undressed. There wasn't ahything the matter with me except that you scared me to death. First of all, we've got to have a little sisterly talk, you and I! I want you to sit right here by me, and I want to know just how you found me in this hotel. I never stopped here before and neither did you."

"It was quite by accident," said Grace, avoiding Alice's eyes and bending low as though intent upon brushing a wisp of hair into place. "I'll tell you the truth. When I came to this room I didn't know you were in it!"

"You didn't know!" cried Alice.

"I am telling you the honest truth. When I came to this room I didn't know you were anywhere near New York. I was looking for another woman."

"Another woman who had run away with Phil?" Alice's eyes danced. She was enormously amused by the situation and hardly less by her sister's confusion.

"I am a fool," said Grace; "the very worst kind of a fool! We've got to straighten this thing out. I want to know why you registered here by the name of Porter?"

Alice's face clouded.

"I had to do it, dear! I suppose I may as well tell you now what brought me home from California and why I met Phil here. It's a story I never meant for you to know," she went on soberly. "Phil has been fine, wonderful about it all. I don't know what I should have done without dear old Phil. We wanted to save you, Grace; we didn't want you to have the hurt of it. You understand, don't you, dear?"

"Yes," Grace answered feebly, her eyes averted.

"There's no need of going into details. When I took father to California he was very, very ill. We did not realize how sick he was. And we had hardly got beyond Chicago before he began to act and talk strangely. It was all about money. The trust company he had established and built up at home has always been his great pride; it was a wonderful institution for a town like ours. When we made him resign the presidency after he began to fail so rapidly, he had a queer delusion that things were not right. I was alarmed about his vagaries for a month or more before I told you he was ill. One of his delusions was that the big steel vault in the company's office was not safe, and after we reached Los Angeles I

found he was carrying a lot of securities with him—half a million dollars' worth—in a trunk. They didn't belong to him at all! I was convinced by that time that he didn't know what he was doing!

You can see how pitiful the whole matter was. I didn't dare advise the trust company that father had run away with all that stuff; it would have been very difficult to explain. I tried to get him to come home, but the next phase of his trouble was a fear that he was being followed, and he insisted on moving about. I hadn't the heart to write you and I wanted to get the securities away from him and return them to the trust company without letting you or anyone else know. I had a horrible time! He suddenly lost interest in the securities—really forgot all about them—and on one pretext and another I got him to consent to come East. I turned to Phil in my trouble and wired him to meet me at Chicago.

"I tell you, Grace, if you didn't love Phil so much I'd be tempted to steal him away from you. He knew exactly how to do everything and he has managed it all perfectly. He took that awful trunk off my hands in Chicago, hurried back home with it and fixed everything up with the trust company; and then he came on here to determine what we should do about father. He wired two specialists to see him and they gave him a thorough examination last night. They are very reassuring and say he will be all right again. He's in that room there now asleep, the first real sleep he's had in weeks. This afternoon we are taking him to a sanitarium up in the country and very likely in a month or so he will be home again almost as good as new. When you called on the telephone I thought it was the nurse who's to go with us. That's the whole story!"

"You poor, dear child," sobbed Grace. "I am ashamed to think that you carried this whole burden alone. It is brave and fine of you." Her eyes filled with tears and Alice flung her arms around her and kissed her passionately. "I've

been so wicked; so horribly wicked," Grace moaned.

"I think you have!" said Alice, drawing away from her and laughing. "You came in here like some furious queen, so fierce that I merely crumpled up and fell down before your wrath. It's a perfect scream that you thought I was trying to vamp Phil; and I can see how you got the whole business twisted."

Phil came quickly into the room.

"Well," he exclaimed, "the whole world seems to have been upside down the past week. When I got home and found Grace gone I'd have been scared to death if I'd had time!"

Grace walked to his chair and clasped his head in her hands and let them slip over his eyes.

"I'll tell you all about it, but not until we see poor papa comfortable in the country and come back here tonight. Then I'll make my confession in the presence of the man I eloped with!"

"Eloped!" he ejaculated. "This may be a good joke, but I don't quite get the point. You certainly made a clean getaway. You not only skipped but you covered your trail completely. If I were a jealous husband I might have entertained dark suspicions!"

"Nobody knew I came to New York," she answered. "You ran away without telling me where you were going, and I thought maybe, just maybe, Phil, there was another woman somewhere. And I thought I'd run away and maybe there would be another man somewhere."

"We're all alike," said Phil ironically. "Go right ahead and tell us the rest of it."

She told the whole of it, going back to Sue Layton's party and the gay cynicisms of her friends. When she told of her meeting with Graham and his quest for the unknown girl Alice repeatedly cried out in surprise.

"You really don't mean it, Grace? It can't be possible *that* man—"

"It's quite possible that John W. Graham is wildly in love with you. It's all perfectly wonderful! If I had searched the world over I could not have found a man I would rather have as a brother-

in-law. Of course if you hadn't been trying to hide yourself and avoid scrutiny by taking an assumed name and all that everything would have been much simpler."

"That was all on account of poor father. We were fugitives in a way and I was afraid that at any minute something tragic might happen. And then when I ran into Mr. Graham in the hotel right here, I thought sure he had been watching us, and that was why I did not speak to him."

"You can explain to him at dinner tonight. He's waiting now at the Thackeray for me to call him. I hope you will give the dinner, Phil; you ought to be very grateful to him for being so nice to me."

"I dare say I should. If I didn't know that Graham is a gentleman I should be disposed to punch his head."

"You don't mean you know him?"

"Known him for several years. He handles bonds on a large scale, being in fact the Graham of Akins, Graham and Company that you may have heard me speak about. I've done some legal work for them in our neighborhood. But that doesn't justify Graham in flirting with my wife!"

"Please, Phil, if I have got to love him, as I suppose I have," said Alice, "I think you ought to forgive both him and Grace!"

"Love him," said Phil; "of course you'll love him. You're all alike!"



His Oversight

By Jay Jarrod

IT had been a glorious evening, and with unmixed pleasure he turned the many memories over and over in his mind. He recalled the cushions strewn about the deck, the salt breeze that wafted by, the strain of the phonograph, the endless rounds of caviar pattés, and the myriads of perfectly blended cocktails. He remembered the countless "clear havanas," the gentle strumming of the ukuleles, the lapping of the waves against the side, the ripple of laughter of beautiful girls, and the superbly mixed champagne punch. He recollected the shuffling of feet to lazy fox-trots, the canary-colored moon, the blue-gray sky powdered with laughing stars, and the admirable Scotch and soda.

He also recalled a certain tête-à-tête with a young lady on the after-deck. Now that he thought of it, he remembered his proposal of marriage to the young lady. The only fact that he did not remember was which young lady it was he had proposed to.



*Was it murder, or just a fatal
drunken mis-step? . . . The girl
whose happiness was at stake did not
inquire.*

The End of the Evening

By Halle Schaffner

IT all happened down at Armstrong's, on the night of his party. Frank Armstrong's parties were famous—or notorious, just as one took them. No matter what were the standards of conduct, how lax the conventions, anyone with claims to greatness—even to brilliant mediocrity—went, or hoped to be invited some day, to one of those parties. And this one was intended to surpass all that had preceded it, by way of revelry, for it was in celebration of Armstrong's fiftieth birthday.

Strange guests came and went, in that amazing house of the frescoes—some whose presence elsewhere would never be condoned, who had put themselves outside the pale save in the radius of Armstrong's larger compassion and broader charity. Others drifted in, secure in their authority of an important name, or with the self-assurance of renown; genius was taken for granted there.

Once within the barred iron doors it was as though some subtle influence released one from the stress of the present, into a past age of enchantment, as it must have been in the days of Pompeii, when some Caesar ruled. Nor was there ever a despot less of a tyrant than Armstrong,—whose silent assurance of hospitality gave to strained souls both shelter and support, until a twist in their fortunes would send them forth again. Many a starving talent had found help there; many a girl at the end of hope, brought her disaster to him, certain of aid. His generosity was as positive as his temperament.

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Only never to obtrude themselves upon him, save at his request, no matter how long they lived on his bounty—this was his one command.

The product of an old and privileged family, Armstrong had slapped its aristocratic face by his contempt for its arrogance. He had created his own order of society, based upon a deeper impulse. He lived free from conformities, and asked for nothing. In return the ancient traditions knelt to him, kissed his hand, and sought admittance. All the world, including his own, came in that night; an invitation there was its own reward.

IN the throng one distinguished the daughter of a railway magnate, chatting with a young novelist; while across the room a famous actress with one of the astonishing Russians, recently imported, and a celebrated connoisseur of Chinese art, made up another group. A diplomat and a naturalist were deep in conversation in a corner, next to a vivid creature with diamond heels who was talking scandal to a theatrical manager. Music, the hum of voices, a haze of cigar smoke, the constant popping of corks, and people, always more people.

A huge, shambling figure, Armstrong roamed through the room, or when he tired of the throng absented himself for a brief rest in his studio at the top of the house. Stairs, a long steep flight, that led darkly up from the landing, set it apart. There, shut off from the world, he painted, ate, drank, and slept when he felt like it. He followed natural

laws, and in return Nature had given abundantly of herself to him by casting him in the mold of that vanished race of Cyclops. A protuberant giant he was, always seeming about to burst out of his own bulk—his great head a mass of upspringing grey bush, grey eyes that popped like little balls of live agate, a wide smile grinning a giant's indulgence and a front that bulged of its own exuberance.

Excess of vitality had in like manner infused his temperament, so that it gave to his genius a quality at once strange and exotic, the fruit of a nature rich and fertile—dynamics translated into violent designs—blues and golds, never seen on land or sea. Once possibly, in Valhalla, there had glowed such a translucence.

As he towered in the doorway, Armstrong resembled one of those monsters that on some of his own screens served as a background for the dancers. He surveyed the crowd with a smile on his big round face, the face of a boy, marked with the creases of a jovial satyr. The Africans played the latest vibrations with their unique accent, a noisy group gathered about the punch bowl. "Hello Mama," he called to the dusky maid presiding behind the pile of glasses. An unsteady laugh, a sudden interlude for a fantastic, mad dance, improvised possibly, as a further challenge to the night—

Armstrong moved toward the stairway, still receiving homage and congratulations. Soon he would be at work, while the mood lasted, creating more monsters, more silver serpents—mute symbols of the strivings and writings of his own soul, that through the medium of his genius he released, tortured and ecstatic, upon the surface of his screens and frescoes.

II

HE caught sight of Mary Dane and called to her: "Hello, Mary! Come and talk to me." He had her by both

hands now, a huge affectionate bear, holding a slim lily, in red velvet, that with pearls, set off her delicate beauty. "I can't now, Frank," she pleaded prettily. "Really I can't. Later, you old dear, I'll come up and watch you paint. I've promised to go down and dance and I must be on my way." She slipped her hand within his by way of farewell, and gave it an intimate little pat. He looked down at her, suddenly serious. "You're just about right, Mary, and I'm damn fond of you. I wish your old Dad were here to watch the fun," he broke off.

"I wish he were, Frank," she replied softly. "How he would have loved being here tonight. Such a beautiful party, and you, the best there is, in a world of failures, mostly." She sighed, then recovered herself. "Well, here comes my partner—" She waved to a man about to claim her for the dance. "I'll be down directly," she called to him over the balustrade.

Armstrong's glance followed Mary Dane. In it one read both resignation and tenderness. She had first appealed to him because of his fondness for her father and later for her own charming self. He realized the gulf between them and the difference in their ages. He had hoped against hope that when she divorced Dane she would turn to him. Now, despite the futility of it his attachment for her remained the same, and he was thankful for her presence in his life. For himself he couldn't look for more—but he would never fail her. He had a secret conviction that she would need him some day, and when that crisis came he intended to be there. He had no longer any expectations, but that had nothing to do with his love for her. Above all, she would always have his protection.

MARY DANE paused for a moment on the landing of the stairs, partly obscured and seemingly detached

from the frenzied gaiety. A definite distinction of dress and manner marked her—in her quaintly sophisticated gown of dark red velvet, with strands of pearls wound about her throat and twisted through her fair hair—she resembled the portrait of a spirited young duchess of some ancient Italian house.

A hand touched her arm with the light implication of a caress. She turned with a half smile and looked up into the smooth face, with the wrecked eyes, of a young man. She smiled tenderly as his touch lingered upon her arm. His countenance, stamped by a mixture of cynicism and violence, was flushed, as he bent his dark, smooth head close to her fair one. In spite of herself, his physical presence had always the force of evoking a quick response, though she still made a brave pretense of evading the revelation of his increasing domination over her senses. She had been too confident of her powers of resistance.

Morgan Everett, or "M. E." as he was familiarly called on the Exchange and in other circles, had—to make verbal his private phrase—had his eye on Mary for the past year. It was a settled resolve made definite by his egotism. His blunted sensibilities, more blunted now than ever, through reckless living, had never admitted the distinction between conquest and love. To his luxurious impulses, forever in search of stimulus, the two terms were alike. Someone had once said that for "M. E." the idea of Heaven must be a glorified and perpetual cabaret. Certainly his approach to living was always through some such medium of amusement, calculated to grant him the full indulgence of his own tastes. He had undoubted charm and a magnetism still too potent to have lost its appeal.

"You're an adorable person, Mary dear," he whispered. "Why heap so much snow on the fire?" he bent closer. "You're a perfect darling and

you know it—and you're going to let me kiss you, precious." She felt the contagious magic of his ardor, but by a swift turn averted her head so that his lips were deflected from her own. Instead they touched the bright waves of her hair close to her temples. Abruptly—"When are you going to marry me?" his hand on her wrist.

"I can't talk about it here," she drew away reluctantly. "Oh, please let me go—please," she breathed in confusion. He released her with a short laugh.

"All right, just as you say, my dear. Not here and now—but some day. It's you I want—you—dearest. Do you understand?" Her glance fell before the intensity of his gaze, then recovering her composure, she returned his look for a long second before she hurried down the stairs. Other people were coming in and Everett went on up another flight into the immense lounging room.

It was a room like none on earth. At the far end, facing the fire, were two enormous divans, built in like bunks and covered with shawls, heaped high with pillows. Low book-cases, filled with a curious collection, lined the walls. Above, on the dark panels, gleamed the plumage of game, autographed sketches, Indian bead-work, by the side of carvings from the Orient, or a bit of exquisite tapestry—beauty without specialization.

At the other end of the room, a great piano, over which was flung a zebra skin, supported photographs of celebrities. Tables and leather chairs, books piled everywhere—a room that held as many aspects as the personality of its owner. In it one felt a suggestion of suave contacts; talk came easily there.

By the soft light, veiled in thin silk scarfs, draped over lamps, Everett glancing quickly about, saw his host and crossed over to him. "Hello M. E."—Armstrong motioned him to a chair beside his own

favorite seat, whose ample curves were reminiscent of a rajah's throne. "What's new?" Armstrong inquired. Everett shrugged. "Nothing much—same old life. Good party—this." He leaned over the table to pour out a drink.

"Did Mary come with you tonight?" Armstrong asked, a shade of hostility in his expression.

"No, but I'm going to take her home." "M. E." sipped his drink. There was a pause before he continued.

Armstrong hardly knew why he had always disliked Morgan Everett—it was largely an instinct. It told him that while "M. E." was outwardly correct, his nature was corrupt. And the fact that the one thing unattainable in his life—Mary Dane's love—might soon be in Everett's keeping added to his reaction. That she had not come to him instead seemed a perverse, ironic touch of fate, but his aversion to Everett went deeper than a grudge.

"M. E." took up the conversation. "I'm serious there, Frank—and I think she'll marry me." A new edge crept into Armstrong's voice, hardening it. "Well, go easy, my boy. Remember—she's not Broadway. No nonsense there—understand? Her father was my best friend, and I feel the responsibility." His tone was decisive.

"Sure I know," Everett drawled, and drew a cigarette from the box. Glancing about for the matches, he saw another small group seated on the divan, near the fire, with a table before them, on which were heaped some empty champagne bottles, goblets, a pile of stale sandwiches, cigarette ashes over everything, mixed with a litter of crumbs from the birthday cake.

Three women were grouped on the couch discussing the party, with lively comments on the guests. Two were fair, the older in a state of languor, mildly saturated with the effects of the wine, and the warmth of

the fire. The other, younger, pretty and dishevelled, had danced earlier in the evening, like some Bacchante at a pagan feast. There was a third, obscured in the shadows, leaning into the corner, who presented a coarse good-humored face. Her plump body, squeezed into a lilac dress, gave out an odor of stale scent. They were stage pals—warm-hearted and common. . . .

"Come and sit down with us, M. E." the one in lilac called to him. But Everett, a look of contempt on his face, left the room without replying.

And then one of the two blonde girls, the younger one, with the pretty, haggard face, did an extraordinary thing. She began to sob! She sat there, twisting her body, while all the time the tears streamed down her face. "Oh, God," she moaned, "I can't stand it—I simply can't stand it," between sobs that tore their way out. "I don't care about anything—but him. I want him—oh, I want him so," she kept on crying, her hands twisting in her extremity.

"Margie, Margie—hush; do hush, dearie. They'll all hear you," the one in lilac tried to soothe her, but the high voice went on distractedly.

"What do I care? What if they all hear me. Let 'em hear! Can I help it—if I still love him? What's the difference, what he did to me? It's no use—going on without him. I don't care what happens now. Let him do anything," she sobbed, "walk over me—if he wants to—use me any old way—if I could just have him again. Just only that." The girl hid her face: "I'm sorry. I—I just happened to love him, that's all."

She continued brokenly. "I knew that I'd have the luck to meet him somewhere—when I'd least expect to—but I thought I could stand it . . . had an idea that I'd grown used to missing him—by this time. And—and this is what it's done to me—all over again! It's the same as it used to be—and it won't change. Never.

Oh, God—what'll I do—all the rest of my life—without him? What'll I do? It's so lonely—so terribly lonely." Her weeping shook her.

In her deep distress she had not noticed the woman in red velvet with the pearls, who had come into the room quietly during the "scene" and was standing nearby, listening with a look of intense interest on her face. Touched, and acting on an impulse of pity, she bent over the girl and put her hand on the thin, sharp shoulder, "Poor child—I'm so sorry," she said, but the girl paid no heed to her. The one in lilac explained. "Oh, she's crazy about a man." To the girl again, "Hush, dearie, hush for God's sake," and petted her, as the other kept repeating hysterically, "Make him come back to me—I can't live without him," still weeping.

The girl in lilac turned to Armstrong who was standing close to her, by the side of Mary Dane. She spoke slowly, her voice emphatic with contempt.

"Of all the men in this town, she had to fall for that rat. My God! He's the kind of man who degrades a woman by looking at her. Had her as long as he wanted her. It was just fun for him—but poor kid, it's been pretty serious for her. Wonder who he has his clutches on now," she added. "Here, hon, take a taste of this," she begged, refilling the goblet, only to have it refused.

Mary Dane looked at Armstrong as the girl finished speaking. His grave face showed plainly the spirit of compassion and indignation working within him. Affected by the glimpse she had been permitted to witness, of wild, sudden anguish, she sank into a chair, near the divan. With a long breath of dismay, for a moment she shut her eyes, to collect, if possible, her thoughts. Disconcertedly they flashed by in broken succession. This poor girl—to allow herself to become such a victim to her emotions! And her candor no less terrible—made explicit by some mad, inward urge, to

relieve the pressure of accumulating misery—the tragic end of frustration.

As she thought about it, there kindled in her a slow new light. This wretched girl who had given herself so completely away, had revealed nevertheless a passion of sincerity that somehow lent a dignity and depth to a light nature. Strongly it rose before her as a symbol of something she had never before understood. "The scarred acres of one's soul" she saw clearly for the first time, but with a beauty in their austerity; Mary Dane had a sudden vision of the desolate reaches that stretched before the girl. Yet was not the girl, after all, much richer for her brief abandon in the identity of another—unworthy though he had proved to be—than Mary herself, with her guarded capacity for giving? Who could ever take that from one?

Presently she got up and went over to the girl again. "Oh, let me be, please. Just let me alone," was the reply, in a tone of weary indifference. "What can your kind know about me, anyway? You wouldn't understand," turning away her tear-streaked face.

Armstrong halted in his pacing up and down, and pulled up in front of them . . .

"Who is he, Edna? What's his name?" he put the question to the girl in lilac, across the others.

Her answer was short and prompt. "Morgan Everett."

Mary Dane, her face drained of its color, looked helplessly around the room as if for immediate escape. With an intense effort at self control, she turned to Armstrong. If he had noticed her pallor and sudden start, he kept it from her.

"Frank, get me a taxi. I must go, now—at once," her voice implored, as did her eyes. She moved toward the door. And Armstrong hurried after her.

"Wait, Mary, I want to talk to you first. Please. Come up to the studio with me for a few minutes." A further look at her face told him all he

needed to know. "I'm not sorry it happened," he mumbled, as he led the way.

It seemed an endless ascent out of the world. She followed up the narrow tortuous stairs, past another landing that led sharply into the studio. When she paused to rest an instant at the top of the flight it fell away like a leap in the dark.

She saw him as something immensely dim and kind in the spectral light of the room, ghostly in its queer blue-green glare, the effect of the lamp overhead, designed by Armstrong. As he turned to find the brandy which he kept in a cupboard, she felt the room more than she saw it—the shapes on the screens, the half finished phantoms that, still wet, seemed to be watching her, strangely sinister to her strained senses. The smell of turpentine and paint struck her sharply as though the odor was all that linked her to reality. Her distress made her tremble oddly, and she was grateful for the liquor which Armstrong made her drink. By what extraordinary play of contrasts did fate contrive to bring about its crisis, she told herself over and over again. . . .

"Now, then, that's better," Armstrong said. "Here, sit down and let me talk to you about it"—he pulled up a chair for her. "This is pretty damn hard on you, Mary," he said deliberately, "but those things don't matter. You love him—going to marry him—aren't you?" He waved his hand emphatically. "You've only heard what you know often happens. No use having any illusions about it. These girls come and go in a man's life—and they're impressionable—and take it seriously. The man doesn't. It's too bad, Mary, that these things happen, but they do—and nothing you or I can do can change it very much."

Mary turned and rose quickly to her feet.

"Oh, Frank, how can you talk that way!" Indignantly, "Of course, one

can change it—or at least I can, for myself! It isn't a matter of cynical philosophy—it's just plain decency." She added. "He cheated her—he'll cheat me. He can't help it—he's a type." She looked away.

Armstrong put his hand on her shoulder and with the other turned her face toward him.

"Mary, I'm sick of all this. Marry me!—I'll be very good to you, child," he appealed.

"No, Frank." Her eyes filled with slow tears. She faltered, "I don't wear my heart on my sleeve, that's all." Suddenly her self control slipped. Like a tired child she went to him and leaned her head against his breadth. At that his arm went round her.

"Oh, Frank," she cried softly, "there's not much difference between that girl and me. I try to pretend I'm superior—but at heart I want him too. Terribly."

She raised her eyes with a look that touched him beyond words.

"I knew I cared, but I never knew how much, until now. A thing like this makes one pause—but does it keep one from loving?" She looked straight before her. Abruptly, "I'm just a contradictory little idiot. And I don't know what I'll do. . . . I thought I was a strong person but—" she shook her head—"that doesn't count any more. I can't give him up." She added, while a slow, painful blush passed over her. "He has me—" Armstrong put out his hand. "Oh, no—not that way." In a whisper. "Frank, it's sheer madness and I know it. In my mind we're both on the same level—she and I. Only—she can't marry him and I can . . . and probably will," she bowed her head.

Armstrong's eyes suffused with rage. "No, by God, you won't," he replied hotly. A sound of steps on the threshold made him pause. Mary Dane moved slowly forward; Everett stood in the doorway.

"Hello there," he called easily. "So

you're here—discovered at last! Been hunting everywhere for you," he announced. He paused to examine one of the murals. Mary Dane spoke a low word to Armstrong. "I'm going, Frank," and slipped by Everett without speaking. "What's up, Mary?" he called, and was following her when Armstrong placed a strong hand on his arm. "Just a moment, Everett! Wait here—I've a word to say to you."

III

MARY DANE made her way swiftly down the narrow stairs. The light and noise from below was borne up to her in ever increasing waves of sound as she neared the lower floor. She had a sensation of collapsing—then a sudden determination with what strength was left her, to get away—out of it all. For the moment, numbed by her own pain, she felt that she could neither think nor feel beyond it. Through a haze made by her own inward tumult she knew the ballroom was still crowded, heard the blare of the dance as the festivities gave no sign of ending.

The maid in the coatroom gave a glance at Mary Dane's pale face and brought the wrap and placed it about her shoulders. With a brief word of thanks she turned and walked out of the dressing-room onto the broad landing and down the wide stairway that led to the vestibule. She felt nothing around her, seeing only the door below that meant escape.

Suddenly the sound of a crash above, fearful and heavy, made her halt. A silence—then a woman's scream. Down the dark sharp stairs from the studio pitched the body of a man. The woman tried to stop the terrible fall but the impact hurled her away. The man fell headlong, violently, on his face. He lay huddled up and still.

A crowd poured quickly from all the rooms, collecting about it; there was no music—only a dreadful hush.

"His neck's broken," a voice said.

So great was Mary Dane's shock of horror that it stunned her and she could not distinguish the form lying there.

"Good God! It's M. E.!" a man exclaimed, while someone pressed forward and turned over the body. But even before he spoke she knew what he would have to tell them, and in a sort of stupor heard him say, "He's dead. Those damn stairs! Poor fellow—God, what an accident!" The sounds of horror broke on all sides. Only an invincible force kept her from going to pieces in front of them as she felt her brain reeling away from her. . . . Armstrong—she looked about her in a kind of agony—where was he?

Then she glanced up, and at the top of the studio stairs she saw him. He stood there, calm and deliberate, while the excitement raged below him. An instant more before he would be missed, but that very fraction of a second—had he not anticipated and counted on it? She felt his eyes seeking her, and she knew his gaze was upon her. As she looked up at him, a mysterious current passed between them—that in a flash of eternity made all things clear. So he waited there, letting her read his heart. By what mute process did its dark message wing its way into her own?

It dawned upon her then that the dead fruit of his rage was only one more instance of his love for her; the blind instrument of a divine purpose, to save her from disaster. Enough that one had suffered at M. E.'s hands—there would be no more. She would never know beyond what she already knew; it would always remain an accident—but for her it was a revelation whose silence would echo beyond the grave. Her soul shone in her eyes as she gave him back look for look, then she bowed her head before the stark thing at her feet. As he saw her go out of the house, Armstrong came down the stairs.

*There is irony in this tale of the man
whose jest with another man's love
acted as a boomerang. . . .*

Entertainment

By E. Franklin Abbott

RAYMOND THORNE desired Diana, but Diana did not desire Raymond Thorne. She studied her occult brows in the little ebony mirror. The cool, regal pallor of the mythical huntress was hers. She raised her eyes to those of Raymond. Only a star sapphire, lifted at noon to an ardent sun, could flame with the transparent blaze of Diana's eyes.

Leslie Raymond Thorne, reigning prince of Broadway, could not withstand this fire, and his gaze wavered.

"I can't make you out," he said absurdly, "Diana, you're driving me to murder!"

"Flatterer!" she murmured absently.

Her hands wandered to her hair. A halo of amber light died upon the chaste metallic gold of her hair. She smiled that oblivious, unassailable ghost of a smile at which he bit impotently at his neat moustache. His brows rose ever so slightly, and he drew on his gloves without haste.

"Till you relent!" he smiled, reaching for his cane. He gave her a soul-searching glance and was gone.

HE strode anxiously under the impersonal clarity of an August midnight, toward the swarming brilliance of Broadway. His cane swung nervously against the pavement; he brooded avidly on Diana's eyes. In their marble setting, Diana's eyes were precisely those crystals for which he had not the price. All that was withdrawn, reachless—and lit with the mockery of cool disdain, was in the eyes and smile of Diana. In their silence was a dream beyond his horizon, unimaginable, evasive, impervious to the polish and subtlety of his amorous technique.

"What does she want?" he whispered.

He shrugged. In his vocabulary of conquest, this was the question in which all triumphant answers were locked. "Give a woman what she wants," went his aphorism, "and she is all yours." But it was here, precisely, that he was most perplexed. He could not fathom her. Casually, discreetly, he had lavished on her all that feminine cupidity or aspiration could dream of. He had written her name in incandescent letters across the sky of Broadway. He had made her a star. He had brought her to the delectable heights. A word or two from his fastidious lips, and she would be blotted out, enveloped in her first obscurity. But he was aware that she would be indifferent. She did not care—that was what disarmed him. Forget her? For the first time in a long career of masterful yet passionless liaisons, something cut across his heart and dimmed his eyes.

"I love her," he whispered. He turned, with a short laugh, and entered Fabrioni's.

Eloise Ardley glanced up from her table with unsmiling hazel eyes. She too was beautiful—but in her beauty was an intimate warmth, a wealth of color, a consoling nearness, a passionate and hungry loveliness.

"You made me wait," said her eyes, as he seated himself opposite, but her lips did not stir. Both were curiously silent. They had reached the oppressive moment when all was known and nothing could be said, and when neither cared to yield to the futility of words. Raymond resisted an impending irritability.

"So you're tired—tired of me!" she

spoke at last, with an even finality, rather to herself than to be heard.

Raymond lifted a deprecating hand-gently, unobtrusively. She laughed.

"Do not be afraid," she said, "I shan't be dramatic."

He eyed her seriously, with a suggestion of reproach.

"It is not my words you resent," she said, "but the fact that I uttered them—I understand." She rose suddenly.

"May I escort you home?" he murmured; she stepped to her car, smiled an inexpressible, devastating smile, and was gone.

The following evening Raymond Thorne was momentarily paralyzed by the news of her suicide. He cut the clipping, tucked it into his breast-pocket, and sank again into his arm-chair.

"Poor girl," he muttered, and fell into an hour's trance. She should not have done it. It was absurd. Her last weapon, her only vengeance. But grief had no affinity with Raymond's heart. He rose, at last; his brows had cleared. Life was too short. Yet, in penance for poor Eloise, he would dine alone tonight—in some unfrequented rotisserie where good wine was obtainable, and where he could sit for an hour and brood over the pleasant sense of desolation left by Eloise.

Bartini's was in consummate harmony with the demands of Raymond's penitent spirit. It was a sombre dungeon, drenched with a meditative haze, a mausoleum of silence and immobility. The solemn rectangles of tablecloth in arctic white, the half-darkness, the sepulchral waiters in geometric black with the gleaming shirt-fronts, retreating from one's table like the priests of a clandestine ritual—within this retreat Raymond wrapped himself in a delicious sense of sober isolation. Bartini's was one of those rare bastilles where a magical undertone could invoke a bottle of real Amontillado. He sipped at ease, till a languid exhilaration drowsed in his limbs. Someone drooped abstractedly at a farther table, with a hazy stare that turned unconsciously in

Raymond's direction, then rested fully upon his face. Raymond answered him with a gaze equally blank. He had seen him somewhere—oh yes, at Fabroni's. Raymond smiled. Of course. Andreas Strong. The same furtive, uncertain, yet vaguely pleasing features. The man's glance slid away hurriedly under his gaze, with that faint smile of embarrassment, as though he had been caught with some guilty secret. Was he trying to avoid him? Raymond remembered. Andreas Strong—paradoxical name for the man who bore it—had always been like that. A whim groped from the restlessness of Raymond's heart and drew him lazily to the man's table. He slipped into the empty chair opposite Andreas Strong.

Draped in a colorless tweed, gray-eyed, with an altogether nondescript air, entirely mute, self-effaced and negligible, he would never have caught Raymond's notice at any other time. No one ever noticed him. He was about as close to invisibility as was possible for anyone that refracted under the light. Obscure, reticent, undistinguished, he had literally tip-toed through his Harvard days, where Raymond had passed like a lurid streak trailing a record of fantastic pranks, heresies, and his final notorious expulsion. Andreas had, indeed, borne off the Oglethorpe Fellowship, but with the unobtrusive ease and characteristic silence that had obliterated him from the memory. He had left only to vanish into an obscurity so complete that probably no one could summon up any recognizable image at the mention of his name. For some unaccountable reason it pleased Raymond to have run into him on this particular night. The man's lack of any visible trace of arrogance, egoism or other distinguishing characteristic, was soothing. Perhaps Raymond was yielding to the expansive gentleness, the desire for easy conversation, that grows on one touched by the glow of a charming grief.

Andreas Strong extended a timid hand.

"Raymond Thorne! What brings you here?"

"Hello, Strong." Raymond smiled again at his bewilderment. Strong was not accustomed to sudden encounters.

"Strange that you should be here!" murmured Strong, "how did it happen?"

Raymond felt the old impulse toward mockery that always awoke in his presence, even in the undergraduate days.

"Grief," he said cryptically, "I have lost a friend."

"Oh!" said Andreas, misunderstanding, and lapsing into silence. Raymond was vaguely irritated.

"Where have you buried yourself," he murmured at random, "all this time? Still tinkering with history?"

"Mathematics," corrected Andreas, "yes — somewhat — occasionally. And you?"

Raymond shrugged.

"You're a disturbing note," said Andreas, "in the quiet of this place . . . you startled me with your air of—of facetious brilliance. Plotting some new intrigue?"

"What curious flattery!" Raymond laughed, curiously ill at ease. "By the way—haven't I seen you at Fabrioni's?"

Andreas nodded.

"The other extreme. I come here for meditation—and I go to Fabrioni's to more completely extinguish my identity."

"What a reason!" said Raymond, "you're the same old fellow—not changed a hair's breadth!"

"I can sit there for hours," said Andreas, "entirely submerged. No one ever disturbs me. The spectacle of what you call the fast life—it ignores me, obliterates me—and I can sit and observe it at my ease. I've watched you there, night after night—you weren't aware of it."

"What do you mean—watched me?"

"Oh, just a sort of game of mine. A little problem in differential calculus. I myself was the quantity X. I would speculate on the type of beauty you would trail in next—the possible variations. An equation in what we call expanding series. And I always felt that I, the unknown quantity, held the solu-

tion of it somewhere. Interesting, isn't it?"

"Very," said Raymond, amused, "and you go nowhere else?"

"Nowhere," said Andreas, wearily.

This curiously anonymous person with his monotonous voice and puzzling ingenuities of speech, piqued Raymond's egoism.

"How do you manage to spend your time, then?"

"Life takes care of that," said Andreas, "at present I juggle statistics for a Wall Street pirate."

Raymond lost interest.

"Will you have something?" he murmured, motioning to the waiter.

"Make it chartreuse," said Andreas. Raymond sighed and felt for his cigarettes. He was tired.

"Must be a pleasant life," he smiled.

"You are jesting. Do you not also find the monotonous precariousness of life a fixed relation? But with you, of course, it's different."

"Why different?" said Raymond, dreamily. His thoughts were drifting toward Diana, and this treachery of his mind was pleasant against the harmless blurr of Andreas' voice. He tried to recall Eloise, but it was difficult.

"Why am I so garrulous tonight?" said Andreas, "what I mean is that I am what is commonly known as a failure."

"Yes?" said Raymond, suddenly aware that he was bored, "go on—it's very interesting."

With a dazed, eager air, as though not quite certain of what was happening, Andreas continued. Raymond's narrowed eyes and inscrutable smile seemed to urge him on.

"Mine is what is called a mathematical mind," he said, "the world to me is a panorama of abstractions. Even you, at this very moment, are imaginary; I feel as though I were speaking to a ghost."

"How strange," said Raymond; his eyes turned inward, and as though over his shoulder, he seemed to feel the transparent blaze of Diana's eyes. "I wonder where she is at this moment,"

he thought, with a twinge of impatience.

"I think in formulas," Andreas went on, "to me the world of warmth and color is a captivating delusion. I am continually forced to abandon the practice of abstract and impersonal contemplation, and yield to the tyranny of trivial and immediate affairs. I cannot take my own unimportant existence seriously. It is so absurd. I do not know how it is done. As soon as I find myself engaged in something universally regarded as important, the absurdity of it strikes me and I cannot go on. To succeed in our present world, one must be naive enough to have enthusiasm. That's what you call it, isn't it? I can't limit myself to that blind, persistent seriousness with which men gain their ends."

Raymond stirred uneasily. He was annoyed. He had an impulse to rise abruptly and leave. That last, searching look Eloise had given him, suddenly haunted his consciousness, and he had an intolerable moment of discomfort. But Andreas leaned forward, and fixed him in a passionate stare. Raymond restrained a desire to burst out laughing.

"I've run through half a dozen professions," Andreas was saying, "in the way you might have run through one fortune after another—and I find myself bankrupt. I am one of those men who never find themselves. I've dabbled in everything from astronomy to toothpaste. Take Wall Street, for example. There are three men on the Curb today, who owe everything they have to my application of mathematical principles to finance. And yet—each time, I find myself eventually out in the cold. How would you account for it?"

"Beyond me," whispered Raymond. How Diana's arms had gleamed in the cool, amber light of her boudoir! How distantly, obviously she had smiled at him, repulsing him with barely a word! Raymond shifted in his seat. The rapid, monotonous voice of Andreas was growing impossible. "How stupid of me," he thought, "to have started him

off. Why did I notice him? Why did I come here?"

"Simply this," said Andreas, "the world is unreal to me. Sometimes I wish to feel that I am a part of it—and I go to Fabrioni's. Instead of struggling for a career, I search for entertainment. There are infinite ways of entertaining oneself—as you may know. I cannot take the world seriously—and in revenge, the world pays me the same compliment. No one knows me; no one gives me the most casual glance. The world is divinely unaware of my presence. I feel this most intensely when I go to Fabrioni's. There I wrap myself in silence and watch the tidal wave of life in all its vitality and brilliance...."

The vision of Diana stirred in Raymond and turned his mind to a vast mist of unappeased longing.

"And women?" he suggested suddenly, with an acrid smile, "are you not interested in women?"

Andreas stopped short, startled.

"Women," he peered keenly into Raymond's eyes, "ah, yes—women!" He passed a hand through his sandy hair.

"The apocalyptic question!" he cried, "you have touched the anti-climax of my discourse. Waiter!"

They sipped from their glasses in silence. Raymond felt relieved. Here at least, he might expect something amusing.

"Woman," Andreas began, "there is no formula for that enigma. Woman is the inebriety of the soul. Woman is the primitive motive. Perhaps a woman might have waked me to realities, in the worldly sense; might have brought me the glow, the warmth, the need for comforting delusions, that might have altered the course of my life. But," Andreas coughed with an abrupt, melodramatic laugh, "I have never known a woman's love."

Raymond was perilously on the verge of laughter, but restrained himself.

"I'd give something to know what you're thinking," said Andreas. "But it's true. I'm ridiculous, but it doesn't matter. You're not laughing at me—I'm grateful."

"Nonsense," said Raymond, "go on, my dear Andreas, go on."

"Even back in the undergraduate days. Remember old Prof. Shanks and his pretty niece?" Andreas laughed reminiscently. "You danced with her all evening. I shrank against a wall, or trailed after you from a distance. Then you were both lost in the crowd—I went home alone. Those incidents were unforgettable—at the most impressionable age, you know. I retreated into my sense of superior remoteness—and never emerged. The presence of women always disturbed this fine detachment. A smile or a glance would hit me harder than a whiff of heavy bootleg after a fast. I would hide my confusion under a freezing exterior, or grow flippant—or worse—clamp shut, as silent as the tomb. There was something unnatural in my talk, in my manner, that scared them off. I recognized my rôle—the outsider, the hanger-on; I gave up. Since then no woman ever gave me a second glance. I suffered, once. But I cultivated this insignificance, I made it an art; now my incognito is complete and I live in an unobserved isolation. Women are a vaguely disturbing unreality—like the rest of the world."

Something absurd, incongruous and pathetic in this curiously ironical confession made Raymond silent. He forgot Diana for a moment and felt dimly stirred by something resembling compassion. But this was strangely mingled with mockery, disdain, and an impulse to taunt him and make him more ridiculous than he appeared.

"Thus," Andreas continued. "I go to Fabrioni's—to surround myself with the passionate brilliance of life, and taste more keenly my own aloofness. You can never know the richness of that experience."

Raymond was struck by something altogether weird, illogical, preposterous. He stared at Andreas with narrowed eyes, and stroked his moustache to hide the irrepressible smile that lurked in his fastidious lips.

"Speaking of Fabrioni's," he said

nonchalantly, "I've just been there . . . I was looking for you."

"For me?" said Andreas, as though he had not heard.

"Strange, isn't it? You see, you were entirely mistaken—about being invisible, unobserved, and all that. I'd noticed you there more than once. But in a crowd of friends—you understand. I never got around to having a chat with you. But as a matter of fact—to be candid—I wanted to avoid you. You've been so frank that, well, you've roused me to the same impulse. I had a good reason for avoiding you—but when I tell you why, you won't feel offended."

Andreas was overwhelmed with confusion.

"Did you say you were looking for me?—at Fabrioni's?"

Raymond nodded.

"I couldn't find you, of course, and strolled in here to puzzle over your whereabouts. And here you were—almost like destiny."

"You wanted to see me about something?" Andreas was still struggling with his astonishment.

Raymond was silent a moment.

"Yes. But I really don't know whether I should. I'm sorry—I should have kept quiet. Forget it. I beg your pardon—please go on."

Andreas stared, and fumbled for his glass.

"Why so mysterious?"

"So stupid of me," said Raymond, "I didn't mean to interrupt our talk. . . ."

"All right," said Andreas, "but you hinted something—about my having been observed."

"Well, I don't know," Raymond meditated, "it's—embarrassing. But—I've given her my word."

Andreas was visibly startled.

"Her?" he whispered.

"All this time while you've been talking," murmured Raymond, "I've been wondering what you were driving at . . . whether I'd have to tell you or not."

"What are you talking about?"

Andreas bent forward hungrily, searching Raymond's narrowed eyes.

"Look here," said Raymond suddenly, "we've had enough of camouflage. Let's cut out this tommyrot. You know damn well why you go to Fabrioni's—and you know I know!"

"For the love of heaven, Thorne!" cried Andreas in real anguish, "what do you mean?"

Raymond scowled.

"All right," he muttered, "if you insist on playing innocent. I've got a message for you, from Eloise—Eloise Ardley."

He drew out the clipping that announced her death.

Andreas held it in trembling fingers, and dropped against a chair.

"I supposed you'd known about it," smiled Raymond.

"Why," mumbled Andreas, "why are you showing me this?"

"I believe you understand," said Raymond, and rose.

"You're drunk!" said Andreas.

"I beg your pardon," said Raymond, and turned.

Andreas scrambled to his feet and seized him.

"Sit down, Thorne," he cried. "I swear I don't know what it's all about. Sit down, for the sake of heaven. The message?"

"That's different," said Raymond, resuming his seat. "Had you known her long?" he inquired.

"Long? I tell you, Thorne, I didn't know her at all, except that I recognized her from the newspaper photos. She would come to Fabrioni's alone—always alone. That's how I happened to notice her. Then you would come and carry her off."

"And you didn't notice anything?"

"No, except that she was very beautiful—and always alone. Waiting for you, I supposed. I would notice her, and her eyes would turn in my direction in an absent-minded sort of way. I would glance away quickly, so that she would not see that I had been staring. Then you would come. She was in love with you, wasn't she?"

Raymond laughed.

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mitted, "or blind—stark blind. Let's assume it's so; I'll go through with the whole thing. With Eloise, it was always Fabrioni's—she always insisted on going to Fabrioni's. She was a strange girl. Brooding over something. Melancholia. Well, eventually, I discovered the reason for her love of Fabrioni's. The reason was a mysterious young man named Andreas Strong. Well, that's that. When I found out, it was too late. I was at her bedside. She kept whispering your name. 'Tell him!' she breathed when I bent over her. 'That's all.'"

Raymond was about to summon the waiter, but paused before the extraordinary alteration that was going on in Andreas' face.

"How many times," Andreas trembled at last, "had I imagined just some such fantastic thing . . . and laughed it off!"

He gaped wildly past Raymond into the dim, silent air. A greenish pallor robbed his face of life; then a rush of color swept to the roots of his hair. His hand shook mechanically toward his wine; the glass slipped from his fingers and dropped to the floor with the splintering tinkle of fragile glass. His legs scraped, he blundered to his feet. Then he startled Raymond with a curiously grating laugh, threw back his head and rushed hatless into the dark outside.

Raymond sat alone a moment, staring after him blankly, buried his face in his arms, and for many minutes lay thus across the table, convulsed with laughter.

II

RAYMOND THORNE outdid himself in one amorous intrigue after another. He left a wake of scandalous excesses, an account of which would take in a broad chapter of the astral history of the theatrical firmament. He was pointed out as the fastest man on Broadway.

But for some reason, each extravagance left a vapid aftertaste and an empty ache. He could not banish from his mind the sapphire eyes of Diana,

nor the regal symmetry and the cool, consoling glow of her shoulders. In the midst of some lavish frivolity he would see her face and grow silent. Life had been a demented saturnalia sweeping him toward Diana. And Diana smiled her faint, disdaining smile, reachless, incomprehensible. They met frequently; there was no obvious aloofness in her manner. But her abstracted gaze gave him little promise. He decided upon an extended siege—he would wait. He knew her kind. They yielded at the moment when they appeared most inaccessible.

Meanwhile, he sought distraction in the olive-limbed, almond-eyed Viola Retti, who had sung her way from a London dance-hall to Broadway. They were laughing over a demi-tasse at Fabrioni's one night after an early performance when Raymond paused, and bent forward to whisper.

"Three tables from the door," he smiled, "to the right—take a good look."

"Yes?" whispered Viola. "who is he?"

"Don't you know him? I could tell you a story about him! Just see him, eating everything up with his eyes. Everything but me—he avoids me. I'll bet his temperature is over a hundred. A rendezvous, all right—he's waiting for someone. Look him over, dreamy-eyes, and learn a secret about life. See anything unusual about him?"

Viola's eyes lingered over him lazily. Her pretty shoulders went up.

"He's nice, I suppose," she murmured, "and he looks so happy. A protege?"

"Almost," laughed Raymond. "Ever heard about Andreas Strong?"

Viola's eyes widened.

"Is that the Andreas Strong? Really? But what's so amusing?"

"Nothing—except that whenever I run across Strong I become a philosopher. That man belongs to me. I tricked him into all he has. He isn't real at all—he's only a ghost, a dream. I made him—out of a whim—with three words. I whispered them in his ear."

"Honest?" said Viola, "then whisper

those words to me, quick. As soon as I'm rich we'll go fifty-fifty."

"It doesn't always work, little girl. Shall I tell you all about it?" Raymond relaxed; one fastidious finger twirled the ivory charm suspended from his watch-chain.

"Oh, let's see," cried Viola, bending forward, "what a curious charm! What is it?"

"Why, a miniature abacus—a Chinese adding-machine, you know. I'm quite proud of it. Notice how tiny the beads are—made of pearl chips drilled through."

"How perfectly marvelous! How did you come by it?"

"A secret."

Raymond touched the tiny beads and murmured under his breath. Then he laughed.

"Each bead bears the name of a woman I have known. This one is for you. I count them religiously—my way of prayer and penitence. It's a rosary of love."

"Oh, you rascal! How many are there? Say them for me."

"Not just now. Some day I may tell you the story of each bead. This one now—see—is for Eloise Ardley. Remember her?"

Viola nodded.

"Her story is very much mixed up with that excited young financier there, Andreas Strong. I ran into him a number of months ago—when not a soul on earth could tell you who he was. He was about as pathetic as a full-grown man could be. All alone—suffering from a sort of inferiority complex. Acting the part of an unworldly genius indifferent to life. It was just after Eloise's death—and I was down with the blues. All shot to pieces, as a matter of fact. Well, do you know how far a man will go when he's too sad to get drunk?"

"Is a man ever too sad to get drunk?" whispered Viola.

"Here I was," continued Raymond, "sitting before Andreas Strong in a lonely chop-house, listening to his autobiography. Of all the proud and miser-

"Look here," said Raymond suddenly, "we've had enough of camouflage. Let's cut out this tommyrot. You know damn well why you go to Fabrioni's—and you know I know!"

"For the love of heaven, Thorne!" cried Andreas in real anguish, "what do you mean?"

Raymond scowled.

"All right," he muttered, "if you insist on playing innocent. I've got a message for you, from Eloise—Eloise Ardley."

He drew out the clipping that announced her death.

Andreas held it in trembling fingers, and dropped against a chair.

"I supposed you'd known about it," smiled Raymond.

"Why," mumbled Andreas, "why are you showing me this?"

"I believe you understand," said Raymond, and rose.

"You're drunk!" said Andreas.

"I beg your pardon," said Raymond, and turned.

Andreas scrambled to his feet and seized him.

"Sit down, Thorne," he cried. "I swear I don't know what it's all about. Sit down, for the sake of heaven. The message?"

"That's different," said Raymond, resuming his seat. "Had you known her long?" he inquired.

"Long? I tell you, Thorne, I didn't know her at all, except that I recognized her from the newspaper photos. She would come to Fabrioni's alone—always alone. That's how I happened to notice her. Then you would come and carry her off."

"And you didn't notice anything?"

"No, except that she was very beautiful—and always alone. Waiting for you, I supposed. I would notice her, and her eyes would turn in my direction in an absent-minded sort of way. I would glance away quickly, so that she would not see that I had been staring. Then you would come. She was in love with you, wasn't she?"

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"Here I was," continued Raymond, "sitting before Andreas Strong in a lonely chop-house, listening to his autobiography. Of all the proud and miser-

able beggars! Think of it—'I've never known a woman's love,' he said. Scared to death of himself—dressed on purpose in a mournful sort of tweed—soft collar and all that. And a face as blank and guilty as an unwritten check. Well, believe it or not, somehow I was sorry for him. And I felt a sort of desperation—I wanted to do something wild. I was off color myself, you know. I swear I did it without thinking—for entertainment—the sheer need to be amused. Well, it was a brilliant stunt, if I say it myself—and it worked so quick it took the wind out of me.

"Simply this—I wondered what would happen to him if someone had really loved him. He was starving for it. And here poor Eloise had just tossed up the sponge. You see, he knew her slightly, or something of the sort—and with a little clever work I got him to believe she had been secretly sweet on him and died of despair. Of all the howling maniacs!—he believed it. It was like putting a match to a house of straw. If you'd only seen the way it hit him! Andreas Strong woke up. Somebody had believed in him, somebody had wanted him—and that somebody was dead! Can you imagine anything more dramatic? Just dope it out for yourself. A man whose life adds up to a neat little zero, suddenly finds he's been sleeping through his one big scene! You know the rest of it—everybody knows. He had the stuff in him, but he didn't know how to work it. That was all he needed—some sort of shock like that. Some men have to be hit by lightning before they are good for anything. That's the sort of fellow Andreas Strong was. He walked into the Curb and out again, half a million to the good. How did he do it? Don't ask me, but he can do it again. He's found himself, that's all. He could have done it all the time. But he had been waiting for something—for me. I pulled the string—I said the magic word—and there he is—look at him—in the midst of everything—the man of the hour. Now you know why every time I see Andreas Strong I become a philosopher."

"How perfectly marvelous!" cooed Viola, "and only this afternoon . . . I suppose you . . . read about it. . . ."

"I haven't seen the newspapers," Raymond interrupted, "it doesn't matter—he's on his way. The sight of that man gives me a sense of god-like power—he belongs to me—I made him—he's dancing in the hollow of my hand. I wonder, little girl, what would happen to him if I told him the truth now? Suppose I whispered a few more words to him, and he saw the joke that roused his little dream. Would he kill me? Would he cave in like a man of sand? Would he crumple up into a heap of ashes? Or is it too late? Is he really real, or only a ghost that would puff out at the prod of a finger? What do you think? I have half a mind to try. . . . I'd stage it, somehow, in the midst of a crowd of his admirers . . . wouldn't it be immense . . . casually spring the magic words and see what happens."

"But haven't you heard, really . . . only this afternoon . . . why, Raymond, everybody's been talking about it!"

"About what?" said Raymond, "I haven't seen a newspaper in a week. About Andreas Strong? Has he made another fortune? Has he discovered a new planet? Has he married an heiress? It wouldn't surprise me. It doesn't matter. It's all mine—all he is, all he can do. . . ."

"Why, he can't be so wonderful," cried Viola, "as all that. All he did was marry. Heavens, there she comes! He's been waiting for her all this time."

With the cool, regal pallor of the mythical huntress, Diana had entered and swept to the ecstatic arms of Andreas Strong. Only a star sapphire, lifted at noon to an ardent sun, could flame with the transparent blaze of her wide eyes, fixed with oblivious abandon on those of Andreas. He whispered hurriedly, and they turned toward the door, Diana clinging to his arm. In a moment they had stepped outside and vanished in the swarming brilliance of Broadway.

“Pitch Doth Defile—”

By Richmond Brooks Barrett

(Author of “Rapture,” Etc.)

*Two can play the same game, and
this story proves that both can win—
if the game is Love.*

CONSTANCE MANCHESTER had coached her brother Bob; since they were going to have dinner at the Biltmore Cascades, she was determined to make a really spectacular impression on the people at the neighboring tables. To her, New York had always meant high life; now, arrived on the scene in the modest rôle of Bob's housekeeper, she felt it was up to her to act like a real live sport. Bob liked the idea, of course.

The parent Manchesters were doing their part by providing an unlimited allowance for fledglings; the fact that Bob, for the sake of literature, was braving the terrors of the metropolis, thrilled the elders not a little. Constance, too, realized the tremendous significance of the young man's move to New York; since she was going to keep house for him, it was her duty to act recklessly, even scandalously, in order to help the budding author to get copy. Constance believed that all fiction should have its germ in actual experience. Bob had implied that his efforts were to be of a distinctly racy sort; Constance, therefore, was eager to sacrifice her former standards of conduct, in the interests of Art. She would do *anything* to make things easier for the boy—yes, even jeopardize her good name if by so doing she could suggest a plot to her brother.

Bob, on this particular occasion, had

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fortified himself with the most glittering brand of cigarettes he could think of. At a signal from Constance (she was to step on his right foot at the proper moment), he had promised to produce the pernicious weeds. Constance was a bit nervous; she had never smoked in public and was vaguely afraid that she might disgrace herself. Still, when she reflected that she owed it to Bob to impress the Cascade diners, she felt her courage stir within her. The people at the nearby tables proved disappointing material, at first; a good many of the women lighted up at once and puffed and inhaled like the worst kind of veterans. Constance frowned and felt discouraged.

“I wish there weren't so many old roués around us,” she confided to Bob in a moment of discontent. “They probably all take me for a provincial.”

THE MANCHESTERS had not long to wait, however, before their opportunity for a master coup arrived. Two men were shown to the table nearest to them—the table lately occupied by the most fearful and pernicious female inhalers imaginable. The departure of these ladies brought Constance and her brother a concerted sigh of relief; with these rivals out of the way, Constance would be much more apt to smoke with abandon proper to the occasion. The

first glance at the two new arrivals sent a thrill through the Manchesters. Here at last was fitting prey!

They were two men—or rather a man and a boy. The latter was pensive, shy and handsome. He looked about sixteen, but the appealing scowl of anxiety between his heavy brows made him appear tragic and very fascinating. The other chap was much older; at once Constance set to work to fathom the relation between these two. If they were father and son, it would be a great pity. Her wiles and seductions would be sure to fall short of the mark, should the more mature of the two men turn out to be a parent. The girl resolved to watch closely, to lay her mines as it were, and with the first evidence that the newcomers were merely friends, to get to work.

She played her first card at once; in other words, she stepped on Bob's foot. With machine-like precision, the grinning Bob brought out the cigarettes. Constance braced herself to the test; she could hardly suppress a tremor as she helped herself.

"King's size! Oh, my goodness!" she exclaimed under her breath. "I've never tried anything so alarming as these." She put the long white shaft between her lips, balanced it for a moment clumsily, then with a flash of remembrance (she had profited by the late presence of the nicotine vampires), she slipped the thing out of her mouth and began to thump it reflectively on the thumbnail of her right hand. This preliminary rite satisfactorily ended, she once more closed her lips over the inordinately lengthy toy and leaned across the table toward the lighted match her brother offered.

The first delirious puff safely out of her lungs, she smiled at Bob. "Aren't you proud of me?" she asked, throwing herself back in her chair as if intoxicated by the beloved fumes.

Bob chuckled. "I wish to God I'd tried you out with ordinary sized ones," he confessed. "You act as if you had a base-ball bat in your mouth."

Constance was indignant. "I think

you're horrid," she told him with a toss of the head. She drew in her breath with annoyance. It was an unwise move; for the smoke got into her lungs and caused her a moment of most dreadful humiliation. She coughed and choked; smarting tears rained from her eyes. It was necessary to bring her handkerchief into play. Constance was furious with herself, furious with Bob, furious with everybody in the dining-room.

All at once, her anger died. The fascinating youth at the next table was watching her. In his eyes was an expression of tense interest, not unmixed with fright and downright awe. He gazed and gazed at the delighted Constance. Spurred on to new heights of abandon by the horrified dilation of his eyes, she blew out two huge clouds of smoke in succession and followed up her advantage with a wise smile. The boy lowered his lids, as Sir Galahad might have done before the vision of Sin with a capital letter. His pain was obvious. He murmured something to his companion; he spoke with a nervous speed, his tone one of passionate protest.

"But Tom!" Constance suddenly heard. "Pitch doth defile."

She closed her eyes, almost faint from joy and triumph. The smoke she let loose was positively amazing in its quantity. "Oh, Bob!" she murmured in guarded tones. "Did you hear that?"

"Hear what?" asked the prosaic Bob, who, engrossed in his truffled sweet-breads, had forgotten all about his bold sister.

"Please stop eating for a moment and listen to me," Constance demanded. "When I'm ruining my reputation for your sake, you should have a *little* interest." She bent closer to him. "Those two men are not father and son. They are just friends. The young one is evidently studying to be a minister; you should hear him quote the Bible about me."

"Look here, Connie, don't get too familiar with those chaps, will you?" Bob was incisive. "If he begins to talk about you the way the Bible usually talks

about girls, I'll have to get right up and knock him into his soup."

Constance drew herself up. "You'll do nothing of the sort. He's a dear boy; it's a pleasure just to look at him. Don't you see what a chance we've got for a big story, Bob? I can see this minute that he thinks you're a modest boy in the clutches of a woman of the streets. What a plot! We'll give him the opportunity to talk to us seriously; then I'll charm him until the poor dear thing doesn't know where he is. You can study him, get his psychology and write a wonderful story about him. You could make it so impressive, Bob; and it would be unique, too. The man of God in the toils of a she-devil!" Constance was nothing if not melodramatic.

Bob scoffed at her. "That would be a new idea, Connie! Why, it's the oldest dodge, the cheapest hoax in the market to-day."

Constance was obdurate. "Well, I don't care. I like the boy and I want to make his acquaintance, by hook or by crook."

"It's much more sensible to put it on those grounds," Bob informed her. "You want to pick the fellow up; you just thought up the other business to make it look all right."

Constance said nothing in reply to this. She tore off one corner of the menu card, extracted a little gold pencil from her purse and, with her brows puckered meditatively, scribbled something on a bit of paper.

"You interest me," she wrote, in a script rich with flourishes and immoral—no other word could adequately describe it—in its immensity and sprawl. "I should like to study you. Won't you join us to-night at eleven-thirty in the supper room? If you refuse, I shall be too angry for words."

The waiter, pressed into the service as a go-between, slipped the note under the youth's plate. The moment of perusal was a terrific crisis for Constance; it occurred to her that the upright and estimable boy might without delay call the head-waiter to his side

and demand the ejection of the wanton flirt.

He didn't do that, however. As if frightened beyond belief, he continued to examine the missive in his hand long after he had finished reading it. It was obvious he didn't quite know how to meet the situation. His black brows were contracted; the lines of suffering on his youthful face deepened. Then, with a supreme effort, he raised his head. The girl was contemplating him in most brazen fashion; their eyes met, frank inquiry in hers, vacillation in his. For a moment, the gaze held. The boy seemed to beseech her to let him off; Constance showed herself hard and merciless. Her prey was forced in the end to smile shyly, and to nod his head with a sort of weary desperation. It was a case of unconditional surrender. Having given the signal of assent, he dropped his eyes, smothered himself in his capacious napkin and made no attempt at explanation to his companion.

Constance had no more need of her cigarette; it had done its part—there was no use in prolonging the agony. So she killed it with a professional air and smiled triumphantly at her brother.

"Thank the Lord that's over," sighed Bob. "Those fellows must be genuine asses to be impressed. You acted like a two-year-old, Connie—honestly you did. What you need is a dress rehearsal before you try another King's size in public."

Constance ignored this. She got up and, while Bob arranged her cloak over her shoulders, she took occasion to wave a hand in all delicacy at her ensnared boy.

II

CONSTANCE felt distinctly annoyed when, outside the supper room, the two men joined them. She had counted on her bashful boy losing his companion; somehow, she was afraid the older chap would be a dampening influence. He might resent their exploiting his young friend; he would rob the occasion of that delightful intimacy she had so relished in prospect.

Bob growled out his protest in her ear. "I say, Connie," he muttered, "You'll have to pay for this out of your allowance. It's not my party."

"Sh-h-h-h—" Constance warned. The two men were making up to them. She extended her hand cordially and voiced a pretty, bold greeting.

"I am so glad you didn't disappoint us," she said. "I was afraid you might think we had some sort of designs on you. I was almost sure you—" and she nodded her head at the older man—"would refuse to let you friend get into my clutches."

The fellow met the sally without a trace of amusement in his grave eyes. "My friend is quite able to look out for himself," he informed her, his tone evidently one of disapproval. "A man of his mettle is never in danger."

Constance shrugged. "What a wonderful person he must be," she remarked reflectively.

"Not wonderful," her critic corrected, "but guided by a wonderful doctrine."

"Then you *are* studying to be a minister?" She faced the boy with it. "I knew it; I told Mr. Gibson my suspicions. You see my judgment is unerring, Mr. Gibson." She tossed Bob a seductive smile.

The dark and tragic boy was very uneasy; the flood of comments at his expense was proving a dreadful embarrassment.

"Yes, I am studying to be a minister," he said, and there was a look of defiance in his black eyes. "Mr. Danford, my friend, is one of the laity; but he has a comforting respect for the servants of the church. That is so rare nowadays; is it any wonder I appreciate his kindness?"

For all his youthful embarrassment, here was after all a man who brooked no taunts, no insults to his cloth! He could strike out at his tormentors when occasion arose.

An awkward pause followed his bitter speech. Nobody said another word until they got safely seated.

Constance broke the silence: her brother was evidently determined to

preserve a glum taciturnity throughout the evening. It was up to the girl to keep things moving.

"Why did you come?" She put it up to the defender of the faith. He sat drooping at her right and kept his eyes fixed on the table-cloth.

At that he gave her a glance of fearless courage, almost of challenge. "I know, of course, that I'm young and inexperienced," he said. "Still, I have a feeling that when a man's in earnest his very immaturity may carry conviction."

"And what are you so in earnest about?" she wanted to know.

"About just this sort of thing," he returned sharply. "To me, the most pitiful and appealing sinner in the world seems to be the girl, with good looks and some pretense of refinement, who cheapens herself for men. Perhaps that sounds brutal; but what girls like you need is the unvarnished truth." In his pale face, the black eyes gave out glints of fire.

"I don't blame you; I don't condemn you," he pursued. "Nor do I find it in my heart to blame Mr. Gibson. You are young and have strayed. If I had thought you were beyond redemption, I should not have interfered. Mr. Danford quite agreed with me that a good severe talk might help. So that's why I accepted the invitation."

Bob had been waxing apoplectic during this recital. Constance, noticing with terror that he was about to lose control of himself and burst forth into dire and profane invectives, ground his toes under her sharp French heel and gave him a black look.

Then she laughed lightly in the direction of her ministerial companion. "Beyond redemption?" she tossed off. "What do I care for the next world, if I can have a ripping good time in this? Nothing matters but pretty clothes and a comfortable home and the attentions of attractive men. Take Mr. Gibson, for instance. I don't mind saying he paid for this frock—and you must admit it's a pretty one."

"You are forgetting that there will come a time when men no longer offer

to buy frocks for you. Your life will be a void; there will be nothing then to fill your heart but regret and sorrow."

Constance was unabashed. "Perhaps I shall begin to think about salvation then," she ventured gaily. "I haven't the time or the inclination now."

"Levity doesn't frighten me, you know," said the boy. "It's a good sign; it shows there is a germ of discouragement somewhere within you. Levity is simply an attempt to silence the voice of fear and repentance."

So it went. The evening resolved itself into one long-drawn out and passionate plea on the part of the earnest boy. Bob was rude and acted like a bored and insolent boulevardier. Mr. Danford preserved a discreet and admiring silence. Constance was perfectly happy; the good looks of the dark youth at her side, his fascinating air of intensity charmed her.

Every word of the excessively long harangue he dealt out was drunk in by her with avidity. Before they had been at their table for half an hour, she felt that she was positively in love with him. There was something electrifying, dynamic about him. Constance played her part of the abandoned woman with a verve and conviction that were astounding, she felt; somehow, the presence of this strange youth spurred her on and gave her miraculous inspiration.

As the evening wore on, the realization dawned upon her that this ardent reformer would give her up as a bad bargain if she made no attempt to take what he said seriously. She must simulate an involuntary response to his desperate appeal. She simply couldn't bear the thought of his going out of her life after so short and sweet a meeting.

So she waxed pensive, drooped a bit at last, as if the force of her defiant resistance was being worn down. She even sighed and shivered a little as he painted the horrors of sickness and approaching death to the unrepentant sinner. He got at once the sign of her imminent submission; his deep-voiced, vibrant eloquence became overpowering.

All at once, he laid a hand on hers.

"Give me a trial," he urged. "You have given Mr. Gibson his. Let me take you to your home; let me have your word of honor that you will go back to a life of innocence—for just *one week*."

Constance straightened and cast a frightened glance at Bob. "I owe Mr. Gibson so much," she murmured, as if moved by an innate sense of justice. "If he is willing—" she hesitated. "If he wishes to release me for a week, it would make me very happy."

Bob scolded, furious at the turn affairs had taken. "You are your own master," he pronounced finally, after Constance had dug him savagely with her heel.

The girl smiled gently now into the feverish eyes of the reformer. "Take me home," she begged wistfully.

A HALF HOUR later, she had bidden the three of them good-night at the door of her brother's apartment house.

"I am beginning to feel already that the future will be very rosy for me," she confessed, her hand in that of the triumphant young preacher. She tossed the desperate Bob a roguish smile, then bent and placed a bold kiss on the cheek of the startled reformer. While the boy still floundered with embarrassment, she laughed lightly and disappeared into the house.

She waited up for Bob. "What did they do to you?" she asked, as he stormed into the drawing-room.

"They gossiped and blabbed like damned fools, of course," he let her know. "Told me your soul was in my keeping, said if I ever lured you back to a life of sin, your blood would be on my head. They wanted to know where I lived and dropped me outside the Yale Club—that was the only address I could think of." He glared at her. Then, "Oh Hell!" he growled. "Here it is three o'clock and I wanted to get to bed early. How can I begin a new story tomorrow, I'd like to know? Upon my word, Connie, you ought to be ashamed of yourself. I never heard of such goings-on for a girl who's supposed to be decent."

Constance burst into peals of laughter.

"The whole thing's delicious," she informed him. "Just wait; before we're through with that boy you'll have the most wonderful plot there ever was!"

Bob, on the threshold of his bed-room, delivered a parting shot. "Don't make me responsible for this mess, please," he advised. "You're stuck on that ass, that's the long and short of it. A new plot indeed!" A withering scorn on his face, he went into his room and slammed the door after him.

III

THE future pastor of erring flocks followed up his advantage to the utmost. Every day, he reported at the apartment; at such times, Bob was shut into his study. "He mustn't know you're around," Constance explained to her irate brother. "Wait till my week of probation is up."

On the morning of the eighth day, young Maverick Townsend—that was the chap's high-sounding name—appeared right after breakfast. Constance, with malicious intent, told the maid to show him into the dining-room. Townsend, on the threshold, shut his eyes in tragic despair. The girl and her swain still sat at the table, lingering over their coffee and smoking cigarettes.

Constance, with a smile half-bold and half-beseeching, got up and came over to him. "You see," she said. "I'm not dishonest. I've fallen from my high estate; I thought it would be best not to keep it from you."

Townsend scowled bitterly at Bob. "I'm afraid Mr. Gibson hasn't been playing fair; perhaps he has exerted undue influence in the past few days."

Constance sprang to the defense of her sham lover. "That is not true, Mr. Townsend," she said. "Mr. Gibson has left me beautifully alone. I telephoned him last evening. I was so lonely and discouraged! I knew I couldn't go through with the life-of-innocence stuff."

Townsend drew himself up. "I don't despair of you yet," he informed her.

At that, Constance simulated in

masterful fashion a burst of hysterical, jarring laughter. It must have aroused the fighting spirit in Townsend; for he rushed to her side, grasped both her hands and shook her with unseemly violence.

"That's the sign I've been looking for," he cried. "You're on the brink of despair; now you *need* me as you've never needed anybody before."

From that moment, he became a stern and terrible task-master. He kept at Constance's side constantly; he dinned sermons into her ears. She loved the conflicts, the diatribes, the occasional fits of tenderness. By the end of the second week, she knew that she loved the man, too.

Then Bob threatened to go from under her. "I tell you, Connie, this has got to stop," he scolded one day. "You're making a fool of yourself and me. The next time that fellow comes here, I'm going to tell him the truth and set him packing."

To this Constance returned, with fire in her eyes, "You will do nothing of the sort. I intend to tell him the truth myself in a few days. If you interfere, I shall leave you and go back home. That's final."

"I give you one more week," compromised Bob. "And when I act, I'll do it with a wallop."

THAT very afternoon, Townsend surprised Constance and Bob at tea. He was furious, that was obvious, and treated them both like dogs. Constance attempted a conciliatory tone, but to no avail.

At last she announced, with a pout, "If you are determined to be cross—you two men—just go ahead. I can't be bothered with you," and she took up a book petulantly.

Townsend came over to her. "What are you reading?" he asked tartly.

Constance met this with a toss of the head. "A very fine book," she returned, "one that you probably disapprove of."

He bent down and spelled out the title. "The Path of Dalliance, by John Weston." In a flash, he had lost all

control of himself. "Are you mad?" he cried. "Do you ever expect to give up sin if you read such nasty, obscene literature?"

Then he did an incredible thing. He twisted the book out of her hand and with one masterful whirl of the arm, he sent it flying through the open window.

Bob jumped up with an ill-suppressed roar. "Look here, Townsend," he shouted. "That book belongs to me. It is one of my choicest possessions; if you take it upon yourself to deface it again, I may be forced to knock you down." Crimson with fury, he stormed out of the room; a moment later they heard him rushing down the stairs.

Constance dashed to the window and peered out. "He's picked it up," she commented, for her companion's benefit. "He's looking at it now, so carefully, to see if you damaged it. Now he's strutting off down the street. I can imagine the curses he's calling down on your head."

Townsend said nothing but continued to glare at her. For a long moment neither spoke. At length, he broke the tense silence.

"That man is coming here to-night, of course." He put it as a fact.

Constance nodded and trembled a little, quite involuntarily.

"Very well," he pursued. "I give you one last chance; if you refuse to take it, I must give you up forever." He walked over to her and put an unsteady hand on her shoulder. "Will you come with me?" he asked. "Will you come *home* with me? I want you to leave this apartment now—for good. My sister will do what she can for you; she will take you to her arms like a mother. Together, we may be able to accomplish what I alone have been unable to do."

"Ah yes, yes!" Constance cried. "Anything but this!" and she waved her hand to include all the dainty rooms of the fetching place.

IV

In the motor, Constance wanted to burst into peals of merriment. It would

be so jolly to tell the truth at last, with a prim old maid as witness of her immense cleverness! She wasn't afraid now of how young Maverick would take it; she was sure his maidenly heart would respond, would thump with joy at the discovery of her respectability. There would be in the forthcoming scene not only the happiness of a new intimacy, but the satisfaction of shocking the Puritanical Miss Townsend.

Maverick's home proved a sumptuous and extravagant place. They went directly to the library; the austere Mr. Danford was already there.

"Tell my sister she has guests awaiting her," Maverick notified the butler. "Meanwhile," and he turned to Constance, "we can drink tea; you won't object to a cup, even though you've just had some of your own delicious brew?"

"Not at all," returned Constance.

Five minutes later, she put her cup down. "Tell me, Mr. Danford," she demanded, "what Miss Townsend will think of me. Will she be horrified at my short gown and the amount of bare surface I show?"

The two men looked at each other—and began to roar with unseemly mirth.

"Miss Townsend!" exclaimed Danford. "That's rich. So that's how you got her here, is it?"

Maverick, a grin of diabolical intent on his face, slapped Danford on the back. "It's been too easy, old man," he announced. "She hasn't had a glimmer of suspicion—poor little thing."

Constance went suddenly quite white and sprang up with a cry. Townsend was upon her in a flash. "There's no sense making a row, you know," he informed her, his fiery black eyes very close to her face. "You wouldn't accomplish anything; that innocent-looking cup of tea was drugged."

Constance swayed, tottered weakly and made a supreme effort to free herself from the man's grasp. Terror-stricken as she was, the effort proved too much for her shattered endurance. She gasped and fell forward in his arms in a faint.

"Poor child, poor child! I ought to be whipped for this; I ought to be flayed alive. What a fool I've been; what a damned ass!"

She opened her eyes; the words she had heard had evidently been in the nature of a passionately contrite soliloquy. Townsend still held her in his arms; she turned her head away in sick despair.

"Do you hear me?" he murmured. "Can you understand?"

Weakly, she nodded her assent.

He caught her up in his arms and, sinking down on a divan, kept her cradled to his breast. "I haven't hurt you, you darling thing," he whispered into her ear. "Tell me first that you forgive me, that you love me, that you'll marry me. Then I'll give you the whole story."

Constance did not move. He brushed her lips tentatively with his own. Still she did not move. Taking the hint, he kissed her eyes, her forehead, her hair, then rested his lips for a long, tense moment on her own.

"I've been playing a ghastly trick on you all these weeks," he said at last. "I'm by no means a minister cub, you silly trusting dear; I happen to be John Weston, author of 'The Path of Dalliance' that you stood up for so bravely. That night I saw you at the Cascades, Danford and I had had a hot argument. I'd just outlined for him the plot of my new novel. He said the whole thing was built up on a false basis. My idea, you see, was to start an innocent girl off in New York and make her want to shock people by appearing wicked. Well, the poor little thing was to encounter a very callow boy and to try her wiles on him. He'd try to reform her,—pretend to, you see. As a matter of fact, he'd be a criminal, one of the heads of the vice traffic. He'd finally lure her to his den, drug her—the rest of the book would be sordid, tragic and all the rest of it. An exposé of the crime trade, you see. Danford insisted the first part of it was impossible, said no girl could be fooled to that extent. Just at the crucial moment, I spied you. I bet him then and there that I could work things so that I could have you in my power.

The minute I pulled that drugged tea dodge, I was naturally going to let you off. Please don't think I meant to take advantage of you; it was all in the cause of Art, you understand."

Constance all at once giggled feebly. "Do you know, that's just what I was doing?" she asked. "I was trying to give my poor struggling brother a plot for a story. How much cleverer you have been than I!"

He kissed her again; this time she returned the salute.

"But how did you know I was somebody unsophisticated?" She couldn't understand!

"But, my dear girl, that was but too painfully obvious!" he protested with a tender smile. "You didn't smoke your cigarette that night; you mangled it, murdered it. It was a dreadful exhibition! No one in the world could have doubted your wonderful innocence."

She pouted. "How horrid you are!" she cried.

"I've known all about you from the beginning," he went on. "At least, he morning after my sermon in the Supper Room, I made all sorts of inquiries. It was great fun keeping your brother imprisoned in his own room!"

He gazed upon her in delighted triumph. "You've given me some wonderful hints for my novel," he told her. "I hadn't thought of making my criminal pose as a theological student till you suggested it."

Constance sat up with decision. "I know what the name of the wretched novel is going to be," she announced. "It's to be called 'Pitch Doth Defile'!"

He nodded. "Perfectly correct," he acknowledged. "What a lucky chance our meeting was, after all. I have just won my five-thousand-dollar bet from old Danford—and a wife into the bargain."

Danford, tip-toeing into the room with a cheque for five thousand dollars poised delicately between the thumb and fore-finger of his right hand, came to an abrupt stop, paused long enough to be a witness of a round dozen kisses—and tip-toed out again with his lips pursed into a silent whistle.

Twins

By Nunnally Johnson

I

TWO men sat at a table in a room and looked steadily, thoughtfully, at each other. Their expressions were dark; another moment, probably, and they would be scowling. Outside a storm scraped the earth. The wind blew fiercely enough to uproot trees, and hundreds of thousands of rain-drops, maybe more, pelted the windows every sixty seconds. Thunderous gods were bending down and attacking with their heaviest weapons. Spears of lightning. The rumble of sheet-iron. Charge after charge of whipping rain. It was pretty bad weather.

Terrible, even. And yet one wondered whether the fury out there was as enormous as the one that struggled for outlet in the breasts of these two men. To be truthful, it was; it was, perhaps, even more enormous. But only a little so. Nature need not have been chagrined at finding rivals here. For this emotional disturbance, manifesting itself in these ominous looks, was above and beyond anything of the kind ever known before in Riverside. Indeed, if anything equaling it had ever been known in the State of Georgia, or has been known since, I have never heard of it, and that's hardly possible.

These two men had just returned to this room, which they had occupied together for many years, from the Carnegie Library. Old, very old friends were Nat Skinner and Felix Hunter, friends from high school days, friends still, after a hundred menacing gestures had been made at the bonds by their antipathetic natures. They quarreled constantly, as everybody in Riverside

knew and remarked now only with indulgent amusement; but underneath the hot words and surface antagonism, as everybody knew also, invisible and intangible ties, as strong as steel, stronger, welded deep affections.

Only—and all Riverside laughed over the facts—they could not, evidently, get along together in the quiet, amiable way which God expects of old men in Riverside. Unsettled questions of the most trifling import became, with Nat and Felix, causes of war. Their tongues were militant defenders and protectors of stubbornly held views. Nat was a Fundamentalist; Felix was a Modernist; but they struck hands finally in compromise, as they always did, though without sacrificing their original premises. Here they found a meeting ground in an agreement not to read ever again an editorial in a newspaper on the Virgin birth of Christ. Again, Nat was bent for weeks on buying a record of "Mamma Loves Papa" as played by Paul Whiteman's musicians. Felix favored Vincent Lopez's arrangement and rendition. A solution of the problem did not offer itself until Ted Lewis's band's production of "Nobody Can Make Love Like My Old Tomato Can" was released. Nat regarded Nita Naldi as the supreme artiste of the movies, while Felix submitted the name of Larry Semon. Then they saw Mr. Hoot Gibson, and an accord was established.

It had been that way with Nat Skinner and Felix Hunter as long as the townspeople could remember. And these townspeople smiled affectionately at their superficial rages and loved them for their not harmful tempers. Even

now, a Riversider, had there been one present to witness these tense looks being exchanged across the table, would have smiled as usual. "Nat and Felix! Nat and Felix!" he would have thought tenderly. "Rowing again!" . . . "But," he would have added, "why not? It must give them a certain pleasure."

It is doubtful if he would have noticed how electric was the atmosphere of the room, for Riversiders were very thick-headed. But it was close, highly pitched, in that occult way rooms have just before drama makes its actual appearance. The two men looked steadily at each other. This was a pause, a resting spell, in the scene. More would come.

And now, Felix feared it. Something, the slightest strange glint in Nat's eyes, a glint Felix had never seen there before, sent a coolness through the blood in his veins. At that moment, instinctively, he knew that this quarrel was different, more serious, than any they had ever had before. He realized, at the same time, that it involved actual danger. Blood, death, perhaps. Yet there was no other sign, no word, from Nat. Only that strange glint in his eyes.

But, bravely and stubbornly, it was he that pressed the argument.

"Cecil and William De Mille are not twins," Felix asserted, quietly, as one would repeat a doggedly held belief. "They are brothers, I admit, but they are not twins."

There was no reply immediately. Only the cold steady gaze. The storm outside flung itself against the house, as if God himself had learned what impended in this room and wanted to come in and watch the fun.

"Cecil and William De Mille are twins."

Nat's voice, when presently he spoke, was low, restrained, as cold as it could be in a warm room. There was something menacing, ominous in it. It lowered the temperature of Felix's blood. Nat had not spoken as in argument or contradiction; he had made a statement, a statement which stood daring, chal-

lenging, a dispute. And behind it, a threat. The steady gaze of his eyes rested levelly, not at all astigmatically, on Felix's face.

"You and Horace are twins," Nat went on, "and Cecil and William De Mille are twins."

"Horace and I are, of course," Felix murmured, the very weakness of his voice giving evidence of his growing fright at what he felt, mysteriously, was coming. "Horace and I are, but Cecil and William De Mille are not."

"Cecil and William De Mille are . . ."

"And I'll tell you why I am certain," Felix broke in, a panic increasing in him. "I wrote to the 'answer man' of *Cineplay Magazine*. He says they are not. Horace and I are, of course—" he sought desperately, at random, to stem the tide of this horrible fury rising before him—"but the 'answer man' says the De Milles are not."

"Then," Nat declared, "the 'answer man' is a liar."

"Horace and I . . ." He could think of nothing else to say. This one instance of twins, acknowledged, was offered again to satisfy Nat's demand for an example of the phenomenon.

It failed. Nat rose from his chair. Felix's eyes, wide from even more terror than has been mentioned before, followed him across the room. Their owner sat dumb and paralyzed. Felix was transfixed. He saw Nat go to the fireplace, pick up the poker, saw him return to the table, saw him raise his arm, his hand, and the poker.

"I am tired," he heard Nat say, "of this difference of opinion."

And with that he brought the poker down, squarely across Felix's dome. It broke in two, and Felix, feeling that any further pretense of friendship would be futile, said, "Just a minute, Mr. Skinner!" Nat returned to the fireplace and got the coal-tongs. He struck more carefully this time, but again the weapon broke over Felix's head, and Felix remonstrated again: "Just a minute, Mr. Skinner!"

"You'll be telling me next, Mr. Hunter," Nat remarked, "that these fire

implements you bought are first-rate."

He was not discouraged, though, and when he returned again it was with a copy of D. H. Lawrence's "Women in Love." He raised it above his head, as he had the poker and the tongs, and struck a third time. Now he was successful. Felix's skull was crushed and he fell over on the floor, dead. Nat put the book on the shelf again.

"Now!" he addressed the corpse sharply. "Now tell me they are not twins!"

II

THE corpse did not reply. There was no other sound in the room, in fact, save the rain, millions of drops of it, crackling against the window-panes.

It was a pity that Felix Hunter had to die like this, for, in point of fact, Cecil and William De Mille are *not* twins. The "answer man" was right.

That, though, was the way it happened. Johann Smith, who was Nat's counsel when Nat was brought to trial for murder, related it to me in the Odd Fellows' Hall one night. It was what Nat had told him, and Nat had held nothing back from his lawyer. And what followed in the little room during the storm he also told to Smith, as Smith told it to me.

III

NAT's head, as he surveyed the remains of the man who had contradicted him on a point of information, was as clear as a very clear bell. His thoughts worked smoothly and quickly. He realized almost instantly that he had struck hastily, but, the fact accomplished, the only steps now lay ahead.

His first was to drag into the room a large boiler. (Nat, so Smith told me, was a proficient amateur chemist.) His next was to pick up the body and put it into the boiler, doubling it and pressing the arms and legs down until no part of the corpse rose above the edge of the container. Then he brought bucket after bucket of water and

poured it into the boiler, until finally the body was submerged.

The chemical process of disposing of a body by dissolving it into liquid is such an elemental part of the study of the science that it is probably needless to go into details. It is sufficient to explain that Nat poured certain salts into the water, that he dropped electrodes into either side of the boiler, and that these electrodes were attached to batteries. This, as virtually everybody knows, will set up a current which is resistless. This case was no exception.

Thus was improvised a machine of destruction which presently began to show results. First, Felix's clothes were consumed in the acid mixture. Then, as Nat stood above and watched, Felix's fingers, his hands, his feet, in time, his whole body was converted into a thick grayish liquid. It boiled and bubbled and swirled, becoming thinner and thinner, while Nat smiled with gratification at the success of his maneuver. In the end he detached the electrodes, picked up the boiler, and carried it into the bathroom. There he poured the grayish liquid into the tub, and Felix went down through the drain.

Nat dressed carefully, after that, and having cleaned the little room of all signs of the destruction of Felix, put on his overshoes, got his umbrella and raincoat, and went directly to the home of his old friend and attorney, Johann Smith.

IV

"At first glance," Smith told me that night at the Odd Fellows' Hall, "it was a difficult case. But Nat, who had a fair store of legal facts in his head, showed me quickly how simple the solution might be.

"It is mandatory under the law, you know," he explained, "that the *corpus delicti* be proved in a murder case. This obligation rests with the district attorney. He must show and prove beyond a reasonable doubt how death was effected. He must, through a competent witness, show what became of

the body. Nat pointed out to me how, when he should be arrested, as was certain when Felix's disappearance should become known, he would have a complete defense. It lay in the prosecution's obvious inability to establish the *corpus delicti*.

"The remainder of the case would be easy to build, particularly for Travis Fairfax, the district attorney, who I knew to be an alert and thorough prosecutor. The premeditation? A hundred people had heard Nat Skinner threaten Felix Hunter, had heard him scores of times. That they would admit, also, that they had never taken these threats seriously — there was nothing for the defense there. Worthless admissions. The opportunity? People had seen Nat and Felix enter the house together that stormy evening. Nobody else lived there. Nobody else had been seen to enter. The motive? There were a dozen ready for a smart lawyer to offer.

"But these things, as serious as they would have been in another case, weighed very heavily against the insurmountable obstacle the prosecution would face in trying to establish the *corpus delicti*," Smith went on. "Nat's murder had been smooth and clean. The boiler had been scalded, the tub washed thoroughly, and all that was left of Felix had gone into a sewer and thence into the river.

"If ever a murderer was safe, I thought, then Nat is. Had he pushed Felix off a ferryboat and the body never been recovered, he would have been in danger, for the prosecution could have shown the means by which death was effected and the means by which the body had been disposed of. But Nat, as cunning as a fox, had established a case for himself which was as pretty as a picture.

"He was, of course, arrested. The authorities simply took it for granted that Felix was dead and that Nat had murdered him. Nor did Nat deny it. He said nothing. He sat in his cell quietly and waited for the trial, unworried and confident. The reports and

rumors of the district attorney's preparations came to him as they came to me. New witnesses found. A mysterious heavily-veiled woman. A love nest. New evidence of all kinds. Much excitement and bustling around. Daily a dozen people were found to testify that bad blood had existed between the two men.

"I? I did nothing. I saw no need. Fairfax went before the Grand Jury and an indictment charging murder was returned against Nat. I made the usual gallant fight for permission to inspect the minutes of this jury, and failed. I didn't care. Nor did Nat.

"We smiled, he in his cell and I outside. We waited, simply waited for the day. I never read one paragraph of law on the case. Alone in my study with my tooled ooze leather-bound copy of 'Barney Google' I waited. . . ."

• V

If the trial of Nat Skinner for the murder of Felix Hunter did not follow the customary rules and regulations for court procedure, it was only because of a general community ignorance of these rules and regulations. It extended, oddly enough, to Circuit Judge Mack. It was his first murder trial, just as, in fact, it was the first murder trial ever held in Riverside. Inasmuch as the Atlanta papers sent reporters down to cover it, certain signs that the town recognized the importance of the event were regarded as necessary. School was out for the day, that the children might celebrate the verdict, whatever it should be, quietly in their homes and with their parents. Honor pupils were promised permission to go to the State Penitentiary to see the condemned man in the event that he should be condemned. The local Klan assembled at its headquarters after notifying Mayor Henderson that the members would hold themselves in readiness for any disorder, either to stop it or start it.

The trial began with the general understanding that the judge, a good honest man, law-abiding and God-fear-

ing, should be the final authority and that no blows would be struck without his permission. And Judge Mack, placing his faith in the Source of all Good, came to the bench with the understanding that instinct, Divine guidance, common sense, and a knowledge of the moral code would provide solutions for all contingency.

The chief actors in the drama carried themselves very splendidly that morning. The defendant, Nat Skinner, sitting between two deputy sheriffs, a cool and what was unanimously taken to be a sneering smile on his face. In front of him, Johann Smith, following the district attorney's preparations with an indulgent smile. An ambient belt of confidence bound client and counsel together.

In the absence of specific knowledge on the point, the court attachés set a fee of twenty-five cents for general admission, the sum to be turned over to the Epworth League's drive for a Bigger and Better Meeting House. And even at that, there was a good house. The preliminary features began. The court clerk called the case. The first twelve talesmen filed into the jury box. They took their seats. The male spectators took off their shoes; the females unbuckled their corsets; all settled themselves comfortably for the show.

"I am satisfied with these gentlemen, Your Honor."

Counsel for the defense had spoken. Not a single adjuration to honesty. Not a question. Not even a glance at the astonished talesmen. Smilingly he accepted them. Judge Mack's mouth opened in astonishment. How fast a murder trial went! Counsel for the defense whispered to the prisoner, and they both laughed, quietly but confidently.

"In that case," it was District Attorney Travis Fairfax speaking, "I am also willing to accept the gentlemen in the box."

Counsel for the defense stared at the District Attorney. Fast indeed! But if Fairfax felt any surprise at the move his opponent had made, there was no

sign of it in his expressionless face as he gazed absently over Smith's head.

"If the Court is agreeable," he continued, "I will call the first witness for the State."

"By all means," the Court replied. "That sounds reasonable enough. Call a witness, surely."

It happened so quickly. Immediately, without any of the long preliminaries of the usual trial, they were in the midst of it, hearing witnesses. It was not uncertainty that crept into the minds of Nat Skinner and Johann Smith—their confidence was too strong for that—but as the first of the witnesses for the State, one Harry Rutgers, began to relate his memories under Fairfax's guidance, something resembling uneasiness and bewilderment began to show on their faces. Here was a serious digression from what they had expected, something they failed to grasp immediately. But Rutgers was speaking.

"It was about nine o'clock when I passed the house. It was pouring down rain. I heard two shots, pretty close together, and then this man"—he pointed at the defendant—"ran out of the house."

"Did you notice anything particular about him?"

"Yes, sir. He had a pistol in his hand. It was still smoking."

Smith turned in amazement to Nat, and Nat shook his head. It was beyond him. Rutgers continued. He remembered many things. He remembered a quarrel between Nat and Felix which had taken place directly in front of his house. That was three days before the killing, he said. He had heard Nat Skinner threaten to "get" Felix Hunter. He had remarked to his wife that some day one of these men would kill the other. His wife had said, yes.

Counsel for the defense turned this evidence over in his mind. It had a strange and ominous ring, but after due reflection he decided that it was negligible. After all, he concluded, there was no getting around the *corpus delicti*. What Fairfax was driving at he

could not imagine, but it promised to lead nowhere. Soon or late, no matter in which direction Fairfax pressed, he would face this barrier. And it, Smith reflected, would be enough.

And gradually, as Fairfax and Rutgers unwound their version of the circumstances, counsel for the defense began to smile. The story was preposterous. His confidence was re-established, even strengthened. This was all fooling, all foolishness. Fairfax was hedging for time. A smart man, he saw the inevitable. He was saving his face, his reputation, by throwing some form of prosecution into a breach which he had realized was unfillable. Nat smiled too.

"Your witness."

The prosecution was through with Rutgers. Smith's smile was complete, now, and full.

"No questions."

The room buzzed with excitement, as it should in a case like this, and Judge Mack, eyes wide, mouth open, astonished beyond measure, and even more excited than that, gazed from Smith to Fairfax and back again, comprehending nothing.

"Go on," he gasped.

Fairfax called his second witness, a woman named Henrietta Malone. She, too, had heard the quarrel in front of Rutgers' home. Furthermore, she had seen Nat Skinner purchase a revolver less than a month before the murder.

"Is this the weapon?"

Counsel for the defense leaned forward, bewildered again, as Henrietta Malone took the gun in her hand.

"It is," she replied.

Counsel's voice was slightly weaker when he said, "No questions," this time, but within he was as strong as ever. "There's no *corpus delicti*! There's no *corpus delicti*!" Over and over this thought ran through his mind, with his spirits whipping it into action, to hold steady his confidence. But it was a hard job and as the trial progressed it became harder.

Fairfax's case grew and grew, stronger and stronger. More evidence came, bit by bit, to substantiate the

theory of murder by shooting. Witnesses had seen Nat with the pistol. Witnesses had heard him promise to "get" Felix. Witnesses had seen him bending over the body. Judge Mack, swayed further and further by the piling up of evidence, began to smile pityingly on the defendant. Plainly he could see as well as the next man how things were going. But he only broke his judicial calm once, when he said:

"Too bad, old man," addressing Nat. "It's beginning to look like you was a goner." He shook his head sadly.

But counsel for the defense clung desperately to his one consoling thought. The hot air of testimony might blow hard, he reflected, but it could not destroy the necessity of proving the *corpus delicti*. But the constant pounding in this direction shook his nerves. It was irritating, exasperating. There was no sense to it.

"I object, Your Honor," burst from him once.

"Why?" exclaimed the Court, puzzled. "On what grounds?"

"On the grounds that all this is too silly," he declared.

The Court smiled sadly. "That's not grounds enough, Mr. Smith," he said. "Go on, young man," to the witness. "You have a very interesting story."

Counsel for the defense did not rise again. Witness followed witness to the stand, each furnishing further material for the prosecution's theory. Counsel for the defense snapped out his "No questions" savagely, doggedly, permitting the allegations to go all unanswered, uncontradicted, uncombed. Tenuously he clung to the plan he had prepared in advance. Finally the ring of evidence against Nat Skinner was completed. Fairfax addressed the Court.

"The State," he said, "rests."

Counsel for the defense rose, a savage smile on his face. "I ask the Court," he demanded rather than asked, "to dismiss the case against this defendant on the grounds that the State has failed to establish the *corpus delicti*." The crowd hummed obediently. Fairfax smiled in embarrassment.

The Court was more puzzled than ever. "Well," he commented, "that's odd. What about it, Mr. District Attorney? That's up to you, you know. I've got nothing to do with it." He shook his head. They couldn't shove responsibilities off like that on him.

Fairfax was still smiling. "This is our first murder case, Your Honor," he replied apologetically. "We were not altogether familiar with the procedure, you must remember." He turned to counsel for the defense: "Is that so?" Smith's smile froze.

He glanced at Nat again, but Nat was plainly just as perturbed by this acceptance of the situation. Together, with a premonition of trouble, they watched the rushing around of an assistant district attorney, waited a few minutes, and then turned their attention to a side door, outside which could be heard the shuffling of feet and an occasional "Easy now! Hol' er steady! Up a bit at that end!" The door opened. Four men entered bearing a stretcher. On the stretcher, outlined and covered by a white cloth, was a body. The four men set their burden down in front of the bench, from which Judge Mack, red and excited, leaned forward the better to see the exhibit.

"My, my, my!" he kept exclaiming.

Fairfax approached the stretcher. He glanced smilingly at counsel for the defense. Then he lifted the white cloth. "This, Your Honor," he said, "is the *corpus delicti*." Counsel for the defense took one glance. There on the pillow lay the still white face of Felix Hunter, a bloody bandage about his head. The Court, leaning far over the bench, lost his balance and fell across the stretcher, knocking the *corpus* to the floor. Attachés restored him and the exhibit quickly to their respective posts.

"This is the man," Fairfax stated, pointing at Nat, "whom that man murdered."

Nat, deathly pale, paralyzed with horror, lay back in his chair, his eyes closed. Smith plucked feebly at the papers on his table.

The Court shook his head. "This is pretty bad," he decided. "I never thought there'd be anything like this!" He turned to the jury. "I don't know how you gentlemen feel about it," he said, "but I'm frank to say that I don't think we need to hear any more. It's pretty plain to me personally that the District Attorney has the goods on this defendant. What do you all think?"

The foreman, somewhat embarrassed at being made conspicuous, cleared his throat and glanced at his mates. There was a general clearing of throats.

"Well," he said, hesitating, "if it's strictly legal we'd like to bring in a verdict of guilty in the first degree. Personally it looks like a pretty raw case to me."

"It's all right with me," replied the Court. "I don't see that there's anything Smith could say that would change my mind now, not after seeing that body there. What shall it be, boys, guilty?"

"Yes, sir," the foreman agreed.

"Well!" He glanced over the crowd. "It looks like the case was over, folks," he said. He turned to Smith: "Smith, I think you'd be wasting good time to say anything now. You heard what the jury said. It seems to me that you might as well throw up the sponge. And the best thing you can do is shake hands with Travis Fairfax and say there's no hard feelings. What say?"

Smith had nothing to say. His wits were scattered. He was scarcely conscious of the Judge's adjourning of court. He did not even hear the imposition of sentence, hanging, for Nat Skinner. He sat like one stunned. The attachés led Nat out.

VI

LATE that night Johann Smith went to Travis Fairfax's office. He could not sleep, he told me, until he had obtained some explanation of the mystery.

"I simply said to him," he said to me, "'Fairfax, the law is a game of wits. We lawyers are the players. We pit our skill and ingenuity against the

other fellow's. Sometimes one wins, sometimes the other. In this case, you won. There's no hard feelings. In fact, I congratulate you.

"But, Fairfax," I said. "How did you do it? How did you get Felix? And how did you get him back together again? Please tell me that."

"And, honestly, I was puzzled. But Fairfax, a royal fellow, took it the right way.

"Smith," he said to me, "I'm glad you hold nothing against me. We all have our ups and down, and this time the breaks came my way. I don't mind telling you. We wanted, you know, to win this case, this first murder trial in Riverside, wanted to win it tremendously. And it looked as if you had

us tied hand and foot. We couldn't find Felix Hunter's body.

"To make it short, that wasn't Felix's body we brought into court. It was Horace Hunter's, his twin brother. I knew as well as you did that we'd have to establish the *corpus delicti*. We got Horace in this office the other night and tried to persuade him that if he was any kind of a twin at all he would sacrifice himself to bring his brother's murderer to justice. But he was a stubborn old fool. He refused. So we had to shoot him anyhow, without his consent."

"Fairfax," Smith said to me, "is a splendid gentleman and a brilliant lawyer. I had to shake hands with him. I am not one to hold professional jealousies."



STATEMENT OF THE OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, CIRCULATION, ETC., REQUIRED BY THE ACT OF CONGRESS OF AUGUST 24, 1912, OF SMART SET

Published monthly at New York, N. Y., for April 1, 1924.

STATE OF NEW YORK } ss.:
COUNTY OF NEW YORK }

Before me, a Notary Public in and for the State and county aforesaid, personally appeared Eltinge F. Warner, who having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that he is the Business Manager of the Smart Set, and that the following is, to the best of his knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management, etc., of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption, required by the Act of August 24, 1912, embodied in section 443, Postal Laws and Regulations, printed on the reverse of this form, to wit: 1. That the names and addresses of the publisher, editor, managing editor, and business manager are: Publisher, Smart Set Company, Inc., 25 West 45th St., New York City; Editor, Morris Gilbert, 25 West 45th St., New York City; Managing Editor, Morris Gilbert, 25 West 45th St., New York City; Business Manager, Eltinge F. Warner, 25 West 45th St., New York City. 2. That the owners are: Smart Set Company, Inc., Eltinge F. Warner, 25 West 45th St., New York City, George Jean Nathan and H. L. Mencken, 730 5th Avenue, New York City; Perkins-Goodwin Co., 33 West 42nd St., New York City. Stockholders of Perkins-Goodwin Co. are: H. F. Crowe Estate, F. W. Westlake, S. Goldman, J. A. Brady, Louis Calder, John Atkins, W. F. Anders, C. W. Rantoul and C. T. Itue, all of 33 West 42nd St., New York City. 3. That the known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding 1 per cent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities are: George Jean Nathan and H. L. Mencken, 730 5th Ave., New York City; Eltinge F. Warner, 25 West 45th St., New York City; Perkins-Goodwin Company, 33 West 42nd St., New York City. 4. That the two paragraphs next above, giving the names of the owners, stockholders, and security holders, if any, contain not only the list of stockholders and security holders as they appear upon the books of the company but also, in cases where the stockholders or security holder appears upon the books of the company as trustee or in any other fiduciary relation, the name of the person or corporation for whom such trustee is acting, is given; also that the said two paragraphs contain statements, embracing affiant's full knowledge and belief as to the circumstances and conditions under which stockholders and security holders who do not appear upon the books of the company as trustees, hold stock and securities in a capacity other than that of a bona fide owner; and this affiant has no reason to believe that any other person, association, or corporation has any interest direct or indirect in the said stock, bonds, or other securities than as so stated by him.

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 28th day of March, 1924. (Signed) ELTINGE F. WARNER, Business Manager.
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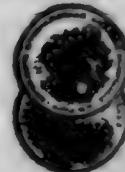
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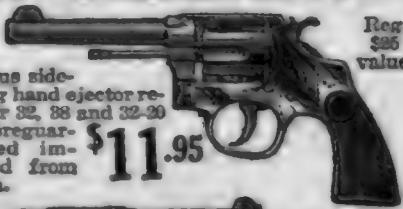
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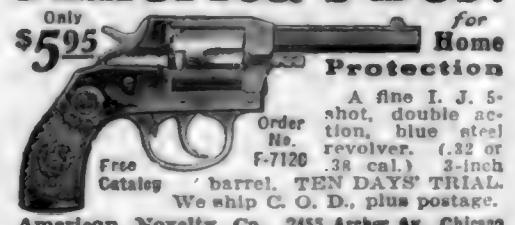
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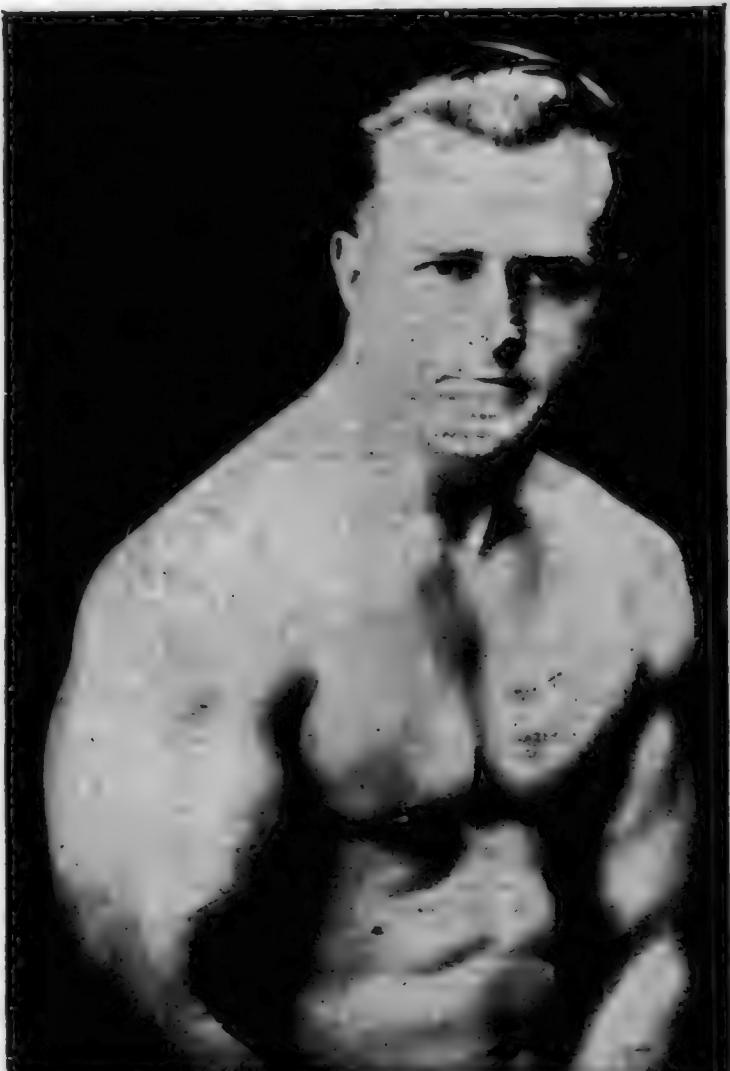
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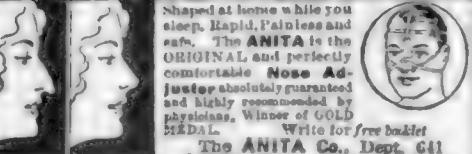
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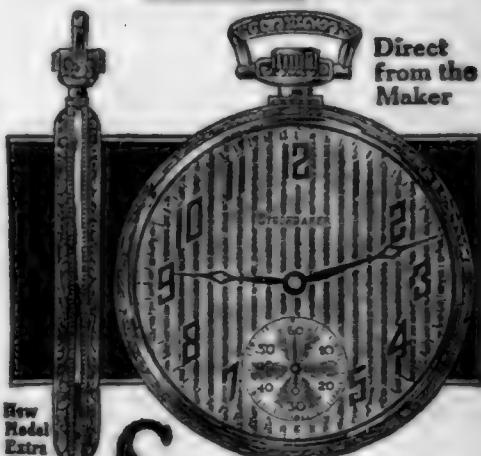
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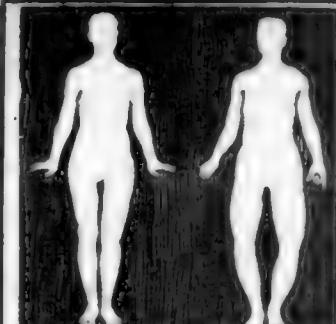
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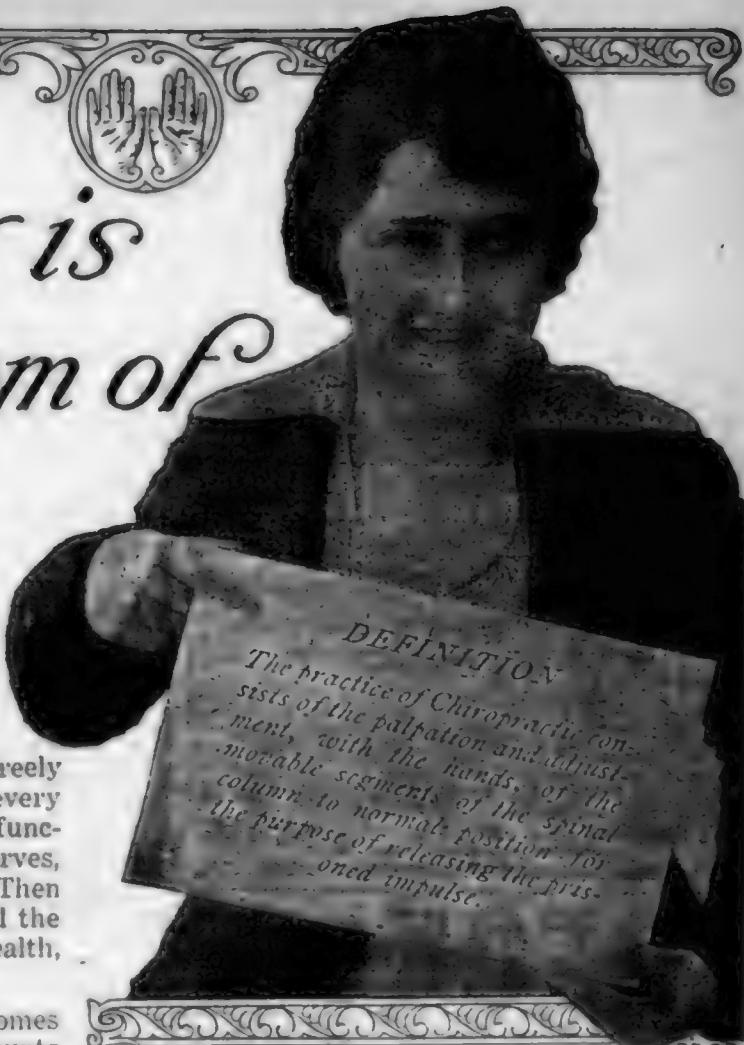
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Finding "The Fountain of Youth"

Along-Sought Secret, Vital to Happiness, Has Been Discovered.

By Walter S. Dean

*Alas! that spring should vanish with the rose!
That youth's sweet-scented manuscript should close!*

—OMAR KHAYYAM.

A SECRET vital to human happiness has been discovered. An answer to an ancient problem which, sooner or later, affects the welfare of virtually every man and woman. As this problem undoubtedly will come to you eventually, if it has not come already, I urge you to read this article carefully. It may give you information of a value beyond all price.

This newly-revealed secret is not a new "philosophy" nor a financial formula. It is not a political panacea. It has to do with something of far greater moment to the individual—human happiness, especially in the later years of life. And there is nothing theoretical, imaginative or fantastic about it, because it comes from the coldly exact realms of the practical where values must be proved. It "works." And because it does work—most delightfully—it is one of the most important discoveries made in years. Thousands already bless it for having rescued them from disappointment and misery. Millions will rejoice because of it in years to come.

The peculiar value of this discovery is in its virtue for lifting the physical handicaps resulting from the premature waning of the vital forces of life, whether due to overwork, over-worry, sickness or the general over-expenditure of nervous energy in the strenuous living typical of the modern day. True happiness does not depend on wealth, position or fame. Primarily, it is a matter of health. Not the inefficient, "half-alive" condition which ordinarily passes as "health," but the abundant, vibrant, magnetic vitality of superb manhood and womanhood.

Unfortunately, this kind of health is rare. Our civilization, with its wear and tear, rapidly depletes recuperative capacity, and, in a physical sense, old age comes on when life should be at its prime.



But this is not a tragedy of our era alone. Ages ago a Persian poet, in the world's most melodious epic of pessimism, voiced humanity's immemorial complaint that "spring should vanish with the rose" and the song of summer too soon come to an end. And for centuries before Omar Khayyam wrote his immortal verse, science had searched—and in the centuries that have passed since then has continued to search, without halt, for the fabled "fountain of youth"—the means for renewing energy and extending the summer time of life.

Now, after many years of research, joyful reports from thousands show that lives clouded by the haze of too-early autumn have been illuminated by the summer sun of health and joy; old age, in a sense being kept at bay, and the physical and mental vigor of former years again enjoyed in work and recreation. And the discovery which so adds to the joy of living is easily available to every one who feels the need of greater energy and vitality.

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1 Damask Table Cloth
6 Napkins and 2 Doilies

*with this
High Grade 110 PIECE
Dinner Set*

*Your Own Initial on
Every Piece*



\$1
WITH ORDER

Martha Washington Initial Dinner Set

No picture can do justice to this beautiful dinner set. I want you to see it on your own table. I want you to know the Attractiveness of its Aristocratic Colonial Shape, the Beauty of its refined Gold Border and Orange band. I want you to see how the big, wide, brilliant gold handles enrich and beautify the set. Then I want you to know the Pride of Possessing a high-class dinner set that has your initial on every piece. I will send you the entire set, on 30 Days' Free Trial.

The picture shows, in reduced size, the attractive initial design. This design is in 7 harmoniously blended colors and gold. SUPREME QUALITY. Everything that high class materials, man-

facturing skill, art and design can do, has been done to make this beautiful Dinnerware a Remarkable Bargain. All the decorations; the initial, the wreath, the scroll of roses in natural colors, the gold edge, and the inner line of orange, are absolutely put on to stay. We guarantee against breaking in shipment. **Each piece wrapped separately in tissue paper.**

110
PIECES

FORMER PRICE \$44.75

Special Slashed Price \$29.95

30 Days' Free Trial — Easy Monthly Payments

This dinner set formerly sold for \$44.75 and without the Free Table Cloth, Napkins and Doilies. You would have been satisfied to pay this for the High Quality and Exquisite Design of this set Alone.

To these points of excellence I have added these additional features: The attractiveness of your own initial on every piece; the lavish beauty of seven color Gold in the decorations; the distinctively handsome big, wide, bright handles. I have also added a daintily colored floral spray which is opposite initial design on every piece.

Send me the 110-piece Initial Dinner Set on 30 Days' Free Trial to use as your own. If satisfaction is not complete, return the set. I will refund your first payment and all charges. The trial will not cost you a penny. Be careful to state the initial you desire. Order No. RA2920. Price \$29.95. terms \$1.00 with order; balance monthly.

12 9¹/₂-in. Dinner Plates, 12 7¹/₂-in. Pie or Lunch Plates, THE 110 PIECES

12 6¹/₂-in. Bread and Butter Plates, 12 7¹/₂-in. Soup Plates, 12 6¹/₂-in. Dessert Plates, 12 6¹/₂-in. Oatmeal Dishes, 1 Covered

Table Cloth (2 Pieces), 8 Round Vegetable Dishes, 1 10¹/₂-in. Meat Platter, 1 Large

Meat Platter, 18¹/₂-in. Round Salad Dish, 1 Service Boat, 1 Sauce Boat Stand, 1 Gravy

1 Covered Sugar Bowl (2 Pieces), 1 Cream Pitcher, 1 6-in. Pickle Dish, 1 7-in. Butter

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Send me the 110-piece Initial Dinner Set and Free Table Cloth, 6 Napkins and 2 Doilies. I enclose \$1.00 first payment. It is understood that I will pay \$1.00 per month until paid in full. I will send you \$2.50 Monthly Order No. RA2920. Terms: \$1.00 with order, \$2.50 Monthly. Price \$29.95. Title remains with you until paid in full. Send me your Big Free Catalog also. Please print or write name and address plainly.

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nicely scalloped. These articles are made of High Class Full Bleached Satin Finish Damask. The design is attractive; the wearing quality thoroughly satisfactory. The cloth is 56 inches wide, bleached, acid-dyed, and finished with a mercerized corded edge. Measures 56 inches in diameter, a very practical size. The napkins are scalloped and larger than usual; they measure 17¹/₂ x 17¹/₂ inches. The 2 round doilies match the table cloth and are also 13 inches in diameter.

Nathaniel Spear
President

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